MARVEL

THE COMPLETE COLLECTION

FABULOUS FIRST VOLUME

MILLIGAN • M. ALLRED • L. ALLRED

X-STATIX

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THE COMPLETE COLLECTION VOL. 1

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X-STATIX

THE COMPLETE COLLECTION VOL. 1

X-FORCE #116-129

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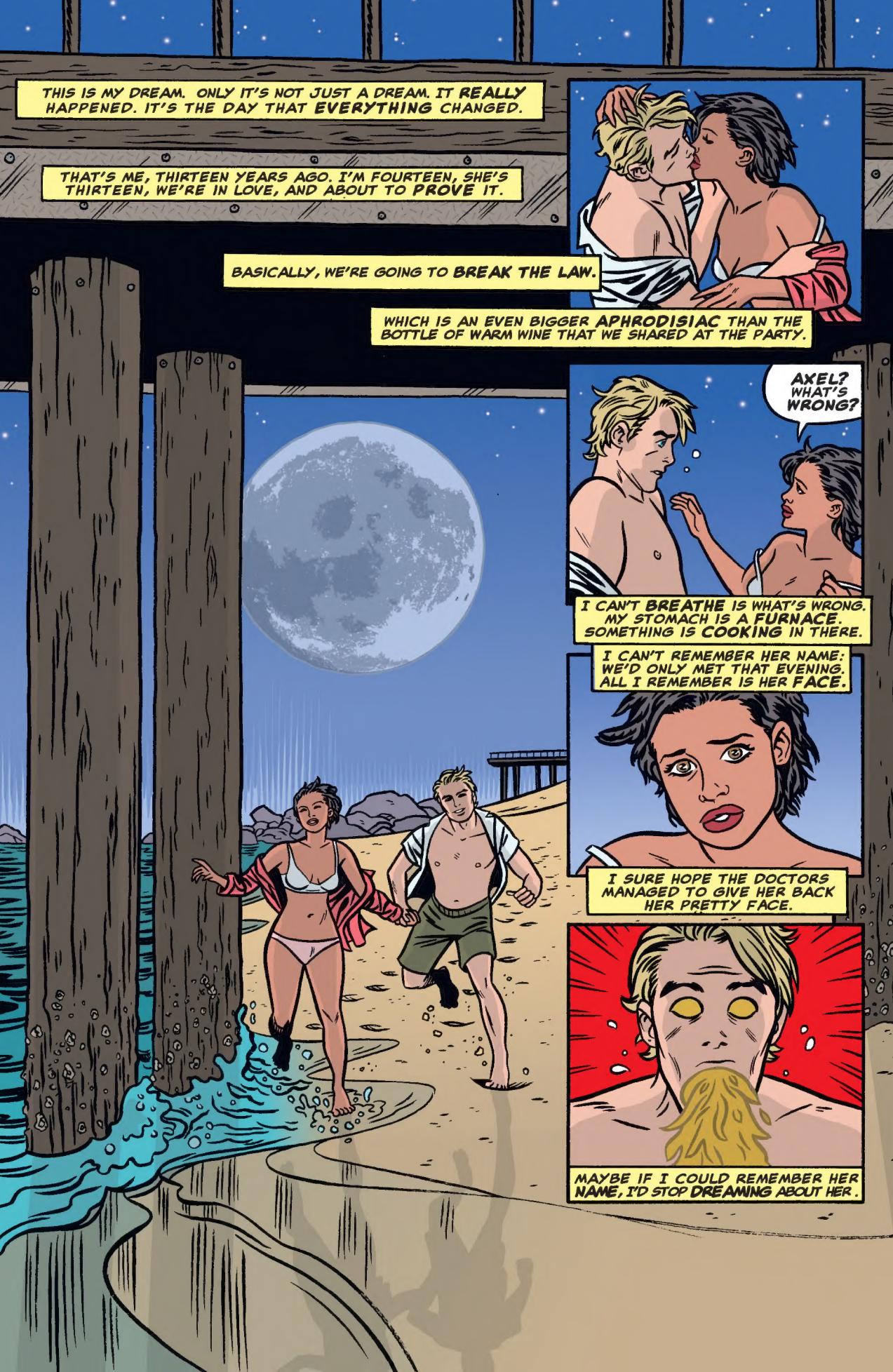
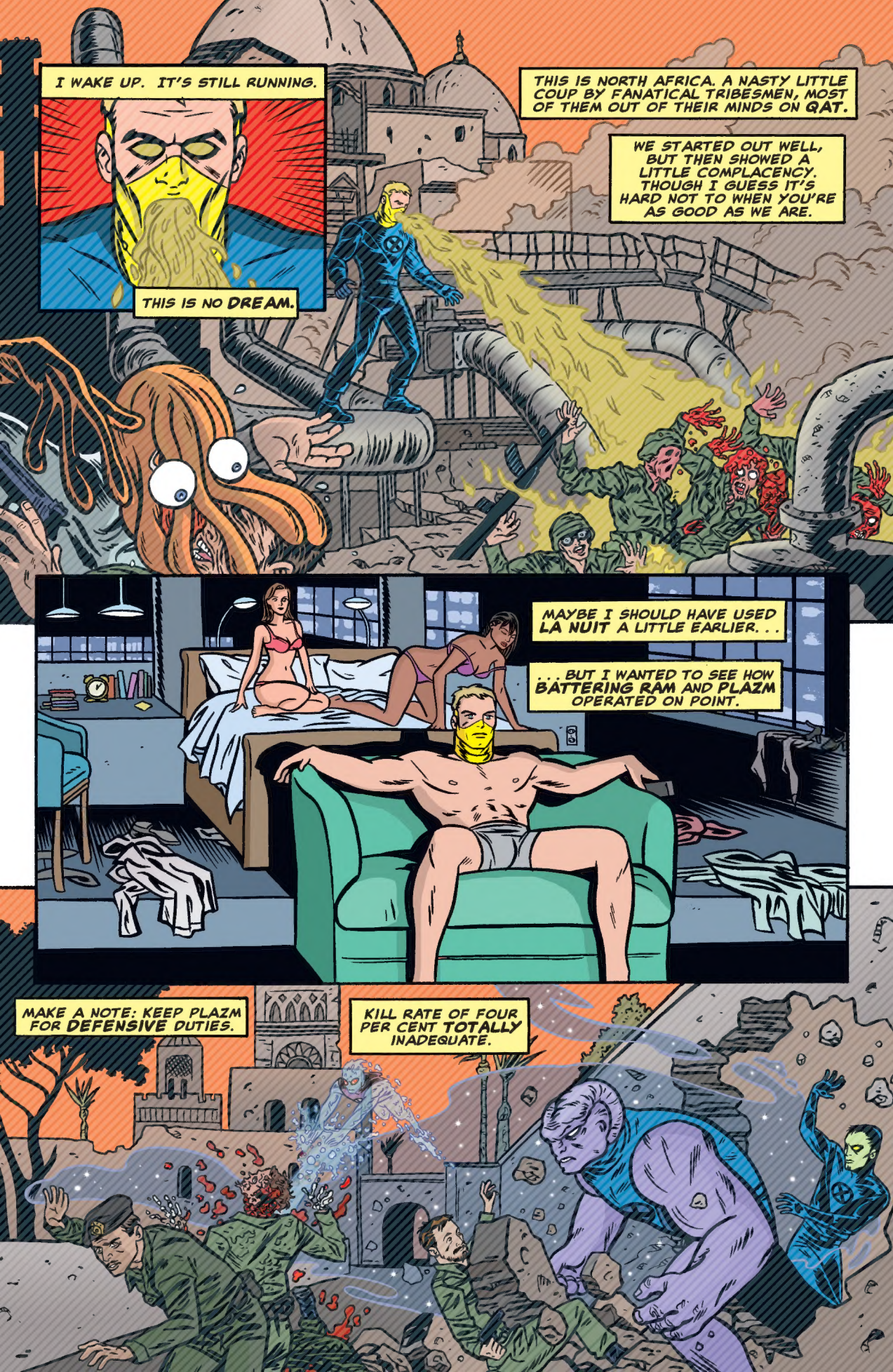
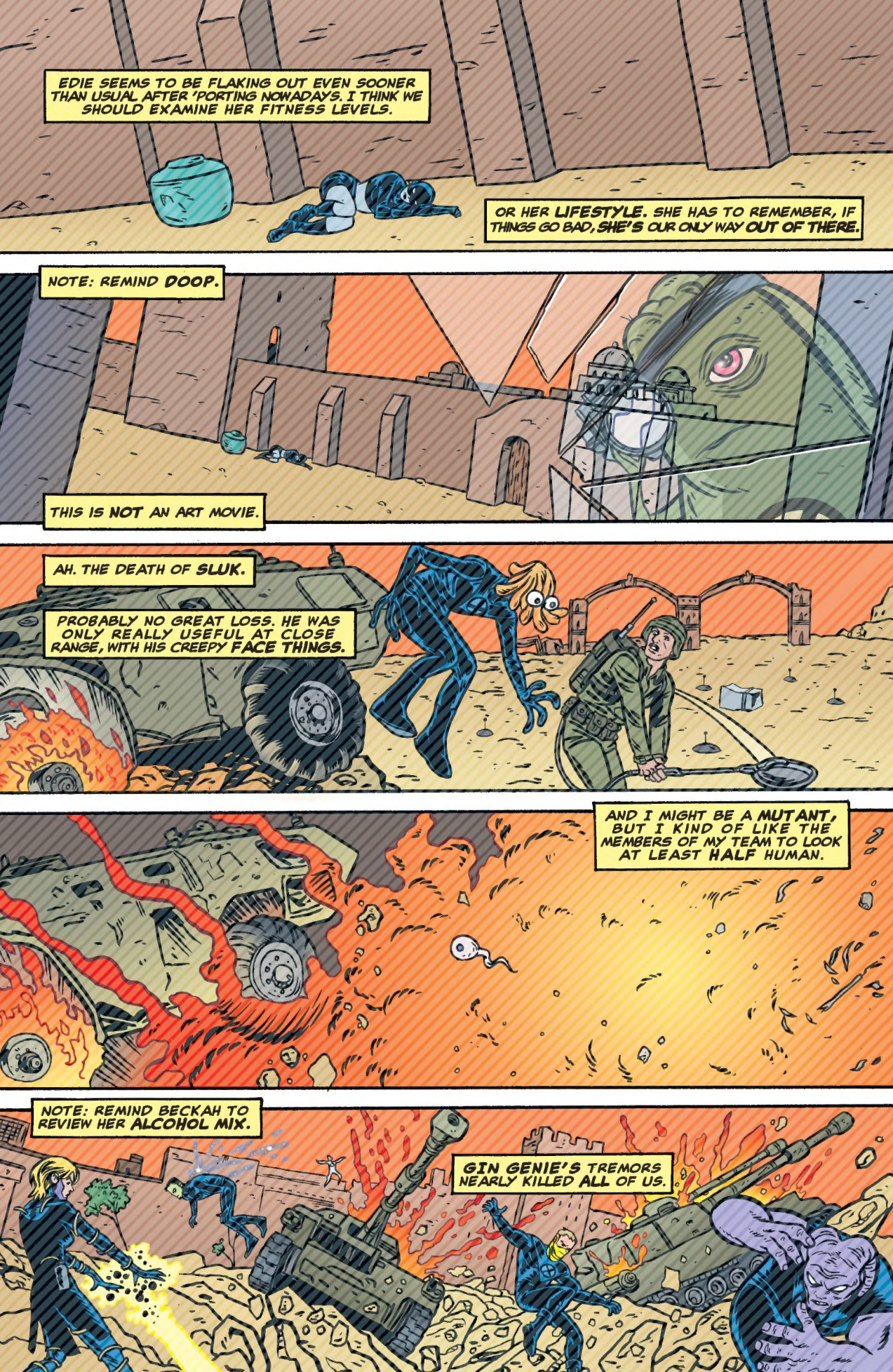
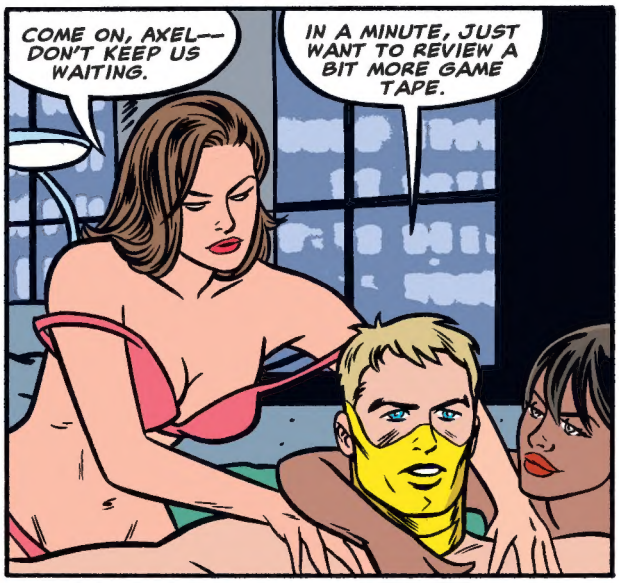
X-FORCE #116

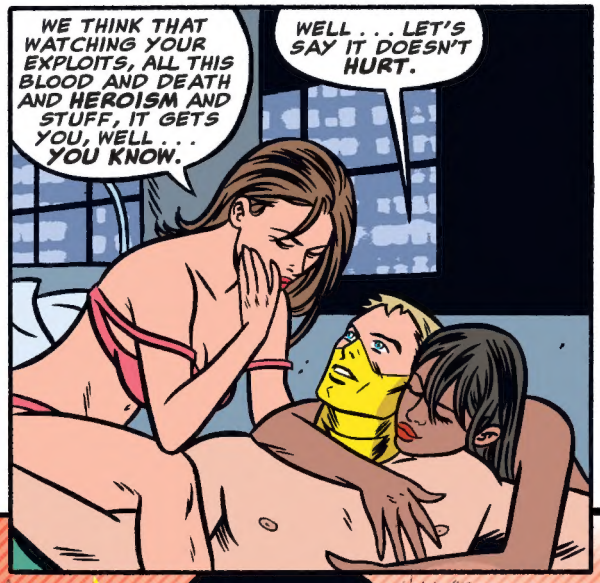

THIS IS MY DREAM. ONLY IT'S NOT JUST A DREAM. IT REALLY HAPPENED. IT'S THE DAY THAT EVERYTHING CHANGED.
THAT'S ME, THIRTEEN YEARS AGO. I'M FOURTEEN, SHE'S THIRTEEN, WE'RE IN LOVE, AND ABOUT TO PROVE IT.
BASICALLY, WE'RE GOING TO BREAK THE LAW.
WHICH IS AN EVEN BIGGER APHRODISIAC THAN THE BOTTLE OF WARM WINE THAT WE SHARED AT THE PARTY.
AXEL? WHAT'S WRONG?
I CAN'T BREATHE IS WHAT'S WRONG. MY STOMACH IS A FURNACE. SOMETHING IS COOKING IN THERE.
I CAN'T REMEMBER HER NAME: WE'D ONLY MET THAT EVENING. ALL I REMEMBER IS HER FACE.
I SURE HOPE THE DOCTORS MANAGED TO GIVE HER BACK HER PRETTY FACE.
MAYBE IF I COULD REMEMBER HER NAME, I'D STOP DREAMING ABOUT HER.

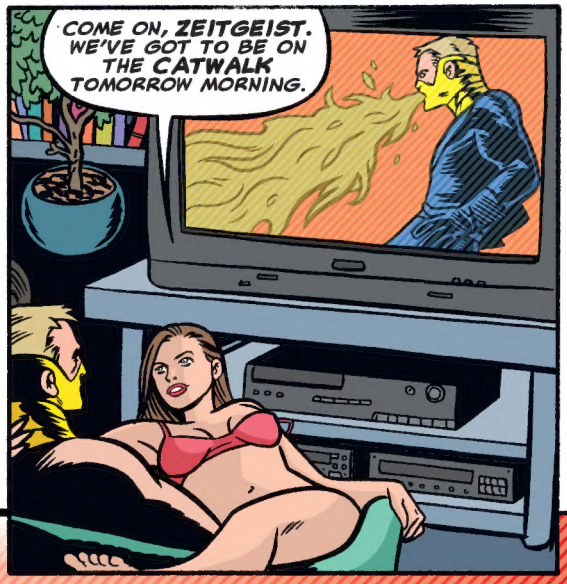

I WAKE UP. IT'S STILL RUNNING.
THIS IS NO DREAM.
THIS IS NORTH AFRICA. A NASTY LITTLE COUP BY FANATICAL TRIBESMEN, MOST OF THEM OUT OF THEIR MINDS ON QAT.
WE STARTED OUT WELL, BUT THEN SHOWED A LITTLE COMPLACENCY. THOUGH I GUESS IT'S HARD NOT TO WHEN YOU'RE AS GOOD AS WE ARE.
MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE USED LA NUIT A LITTLE EARLIER. . .
. . . BUT I WANTED TO SEE HOW BATTERING RAM AND PLAZM OPERATED ON POINT.
MAKE A NOTE: KEEP PLAZM FOR DEFENSIVE DUTIES.
KILL RATE OF FOUR PER CENT TOTALLY INADEQUATE.


EDIE SEEMS TO BE FLAKING OUT EVEN SOONER THAN USUAL AFTER 'PORTING NOWADAYS. I THINK WE SHOULD EXAMINE HER FITNESS LEVELS.
OR HER LIFESTYLE. SHE HAS TO REMEMBER, IF THINGS GO BAD, SHE'S OUR ONLY WAY OUT OF THERE.
NOTE: REMIND DOOP.
THIS IS NOT AN ART MOVIE.
AH. THE DEATH OF SLUK.
PROBABLY NO GREAT LOSS. HE WAS ONLY REALLY USEFUL AT CLOSE RANGE, WITH HIS CREEPY FACE THINGS.
AND I MIGHT BE A MUTANT, BUT I KIND OF LIKE THE MEMBERS OF MY TEAM TO LOOK AT LEAST HALF HUMAN.
NOTE: REMIND BECKAH TO REVIEW HER ALCOHOL MIX.
GIN GENIE'S TREMORS NEARLY KILLED ALL OF US.


COME ON, AXEL— DON'T KEEP US WAITING.
IN A MINUTE, JUST WANT TO REVIEW A BIT MORE GAME TAPE.

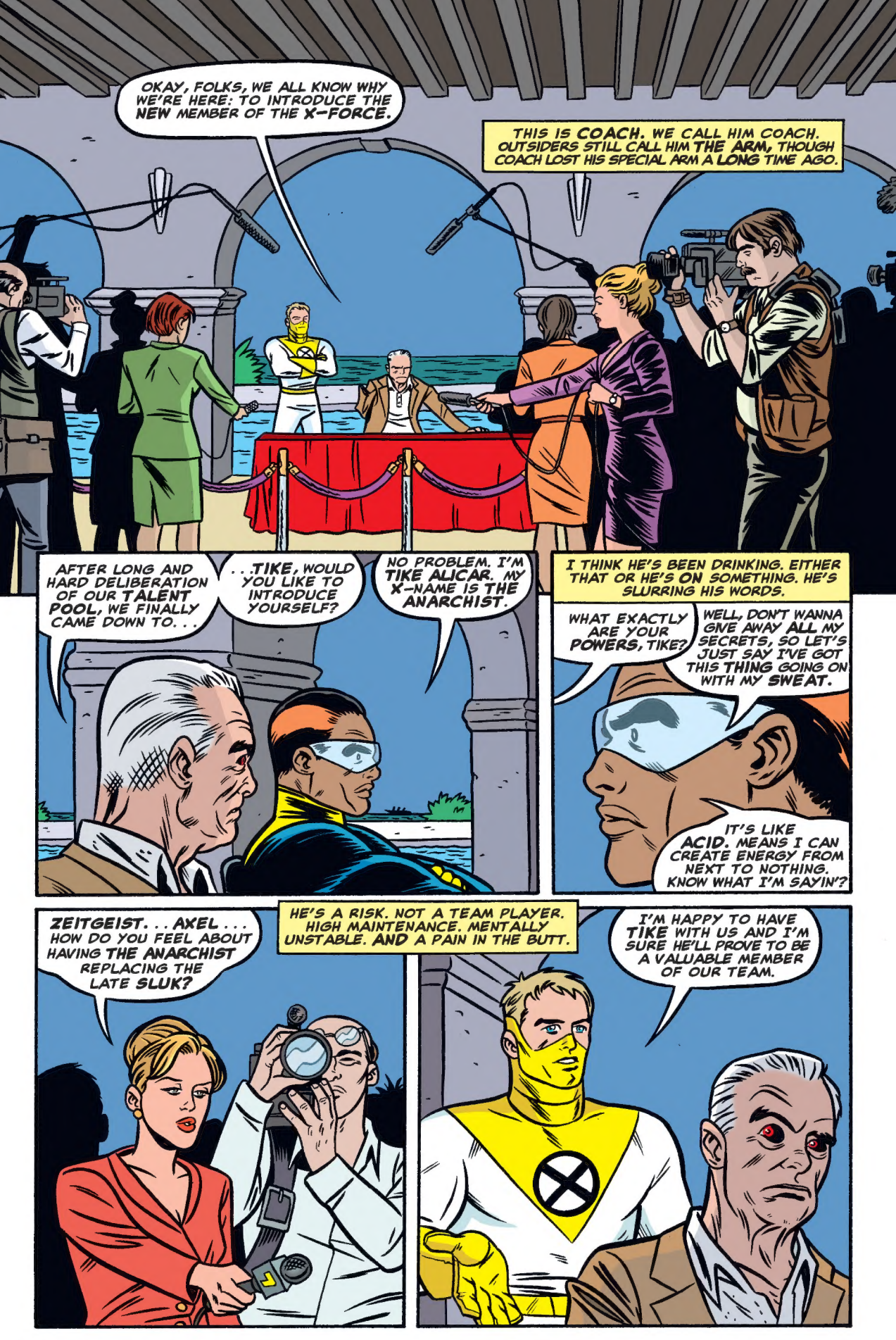
YOU KNOW, CINDI AND I HAVE BEEN TALKING AND WE THINK THIS ISN'T JUST ABOUT TACTICS.

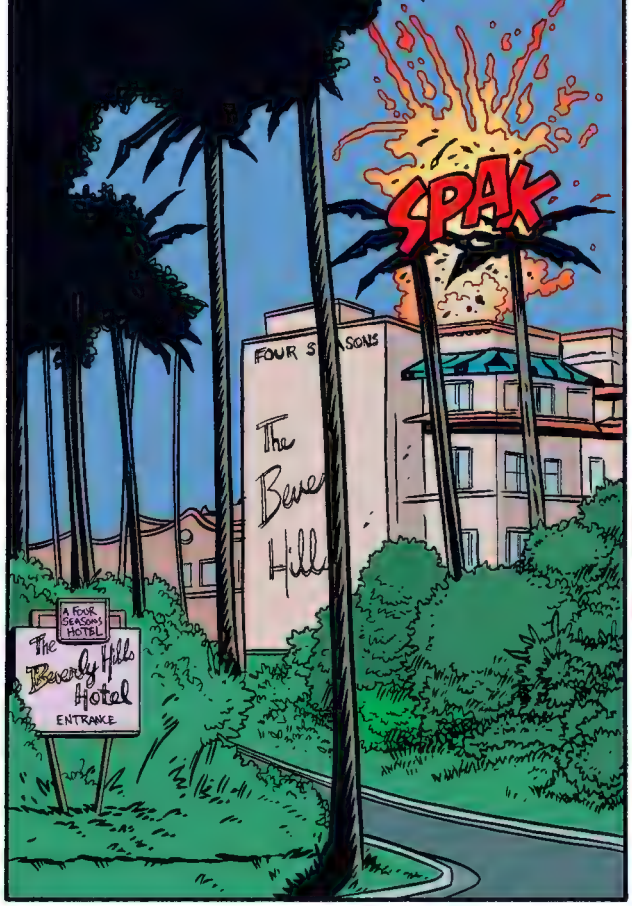

WE THINK THAT WATCHING YOUR EXPLOITS, ALL THIS BLOOD AND DEATH AND HEROISM AND STUFF, IT GETS YOU, WELL . . . YOU KNOW.
WELL . . . LET'S SAY IT DOESN'T HURT.

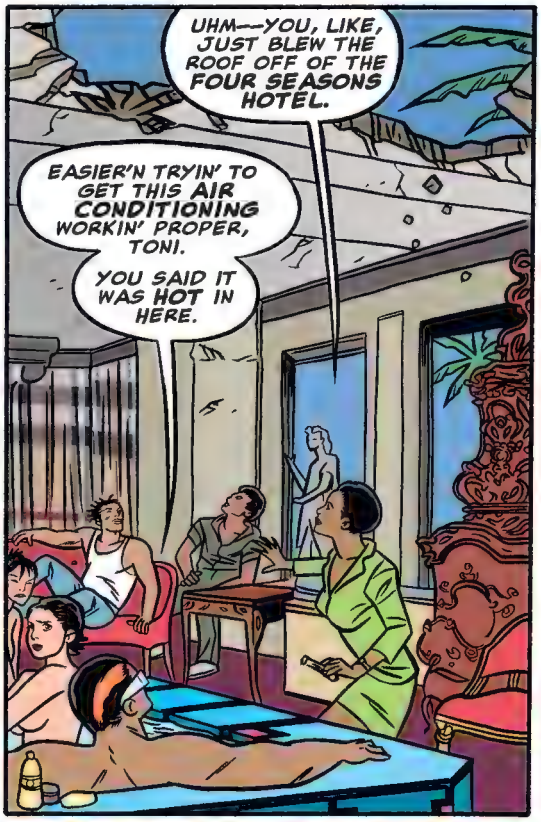

COME ON, ZEITGEIST. WE'VE GOT TO BE ON THE CATWALK TOMORROW MORNING.

ME TOO.

EXIT WOUNDS
PETER MILLIGAN-WRITER
LAURA ALLRED - COLORIST & SEPARATOR
AXEL ALONSO-EDITOR
MICHAEL ALLRED-ARTIST
MICHAEL ALLRED & BLAMBOT - LETTERER
JOE QUESADA-CHIEF
BILL JEMAS-PRES.


OKAY, FOLKS, WE ALL KNOW WHY WE'RE HERE: TO INTRODUCE THE NEW MEMBER OF THE X-FORCE.
THIS IS COACH. WE CALL HIM COACH. OUTSIDERS STILL CALL HIM THE ARM, THOUGH COACH LOST HIS SPECIAL ARM A LONG TIME AGO.
AFTER LONG AND HARD DELIBERATION OF OUR TALENT POOL, WE FINALLY CAME DOWN TO...
...TIKE, WOULD YOU LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOURSELF?
NO PROBLEM. I'M TIKE ALICAR. MY X-NAME IS THE ANARCHIST.
I THINK HE'S BEEN DRINKING. EITHER THAT OR HE'S ON SOMETHING. HE'S SLURRING HIS WORDS.
WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOUR POWERS, TIKE?
WELL, DON'T WANNA GIVE AWAY ALL MY SECRETS, SO LET'S JUST SAY I'VE GOT THIS THING GOING ON WITH MY SWEAT.
IT'S LIKE ACID. MEANS I CAN CREATE ENERGY FROM NEXT TO NOTHING. KNOW WHAT I'M SAYIN'?
ZEITGEIST... AXEL... HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT HAVING THE ANARCHIST REPLACING THE LATE SLUK?
HE'S A RISK. NOT A TEAM PLAYER. HIGH MAINTENANCE. MENTALLY UNSTABLE. AND A PAIN IN THE BUTT.
I'M HAPPY TO HAVE TIKE WITH US AND I'M SURE HE'LL PROVE TO BE A VALUABLE MEMBER OF OUR TEAM.

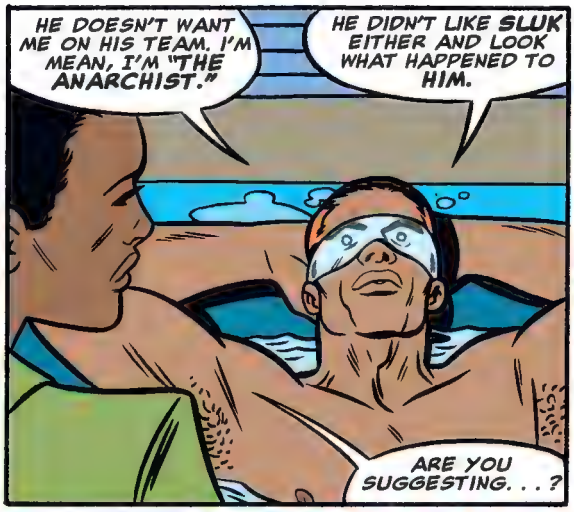

SPAK
FOUR SEASONS
The Beverly Hills
A FOUR SEASONS HOTEL
The Beverly Hills Hotel
ENTRANCE


UHM—YOU, LIKE, JUST BLEW THE ROOF OFF OF THE FOUR SEASONS HOTEL.
EASIER'N TRYIN' TO GET THIS AIR CONDITIONING WORKIN' PROPER, TONI.
YOU SAID IT WAS HOT IN HERE.

YEAH, I DID. WHERE WAS I. . .
YOU WERE SWEATIN', I SEEM TO REMEMBER. AND ASKIN' ME ABOUT ZEIT-#@$&!-GEIST.
YEAH, RIGHT, DO YOU THINK—
TMESIS.

I'M SORRY—?
TMESIS. THAT'S THE TECHNICAL TERM FOR WHAT I JUST DID. THE SEPARATION OF A COMPOUND WORD BY THE INTERPOSITION OF ANOTHER.
D'YOU THINK I'M STUPID, TONI?

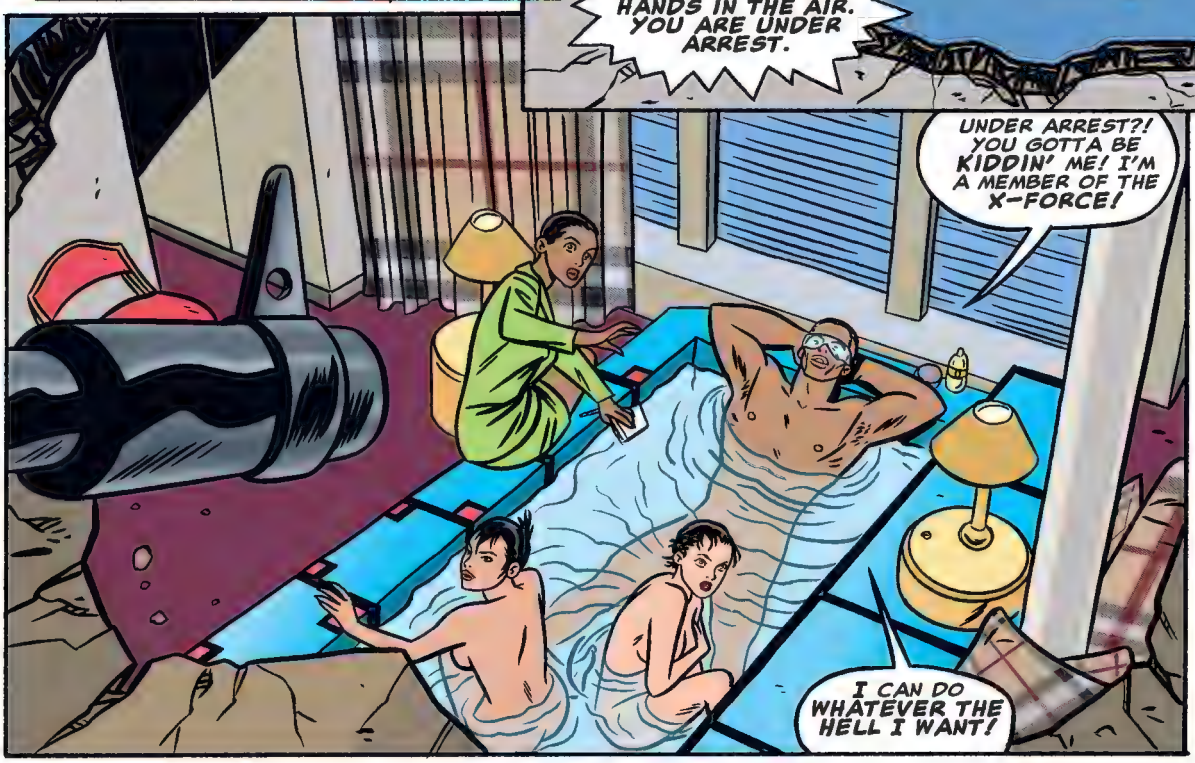
YOU'RE ANYTHING BUT.
WELL, HE THINKS I'M STUPID. MR. AXEL CLUNEY, MR. ZEIT-TMESIS-GEIST.
AND THAT'S HOW HE WANTS ME TO FEEL IN HIS TEAM, LIKE SOME CURSE WORD STUFFED WHERE IT DOESN'T BELONG.

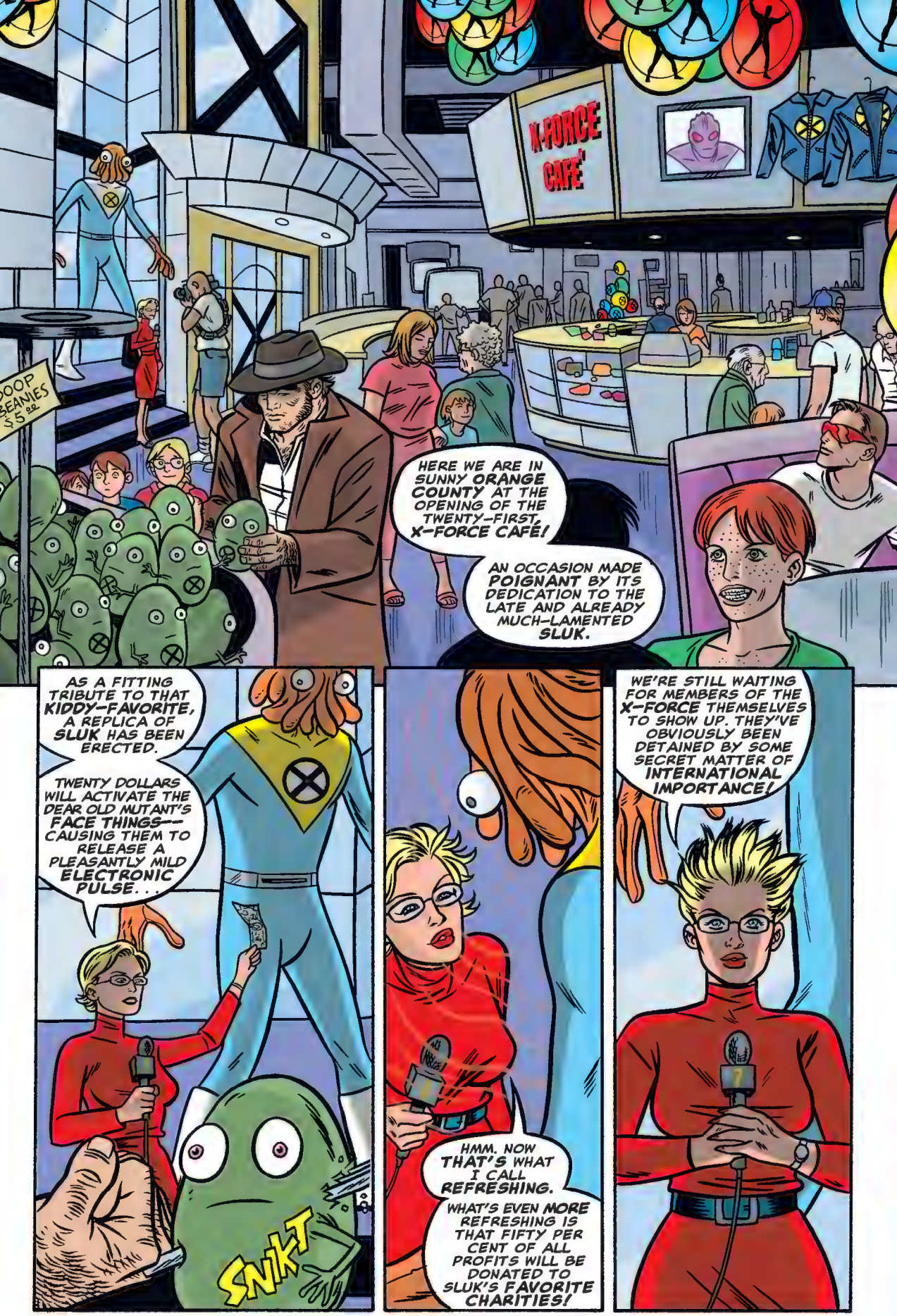

HE DOESN'T WANT ME ON HIS TEAM. I'M MEAN, I'M "THE ANARCHIST."
HE DIDN'T LIKE SLUK EITHER AND LOOK WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM.
ARE YOU SUGGESTING...?

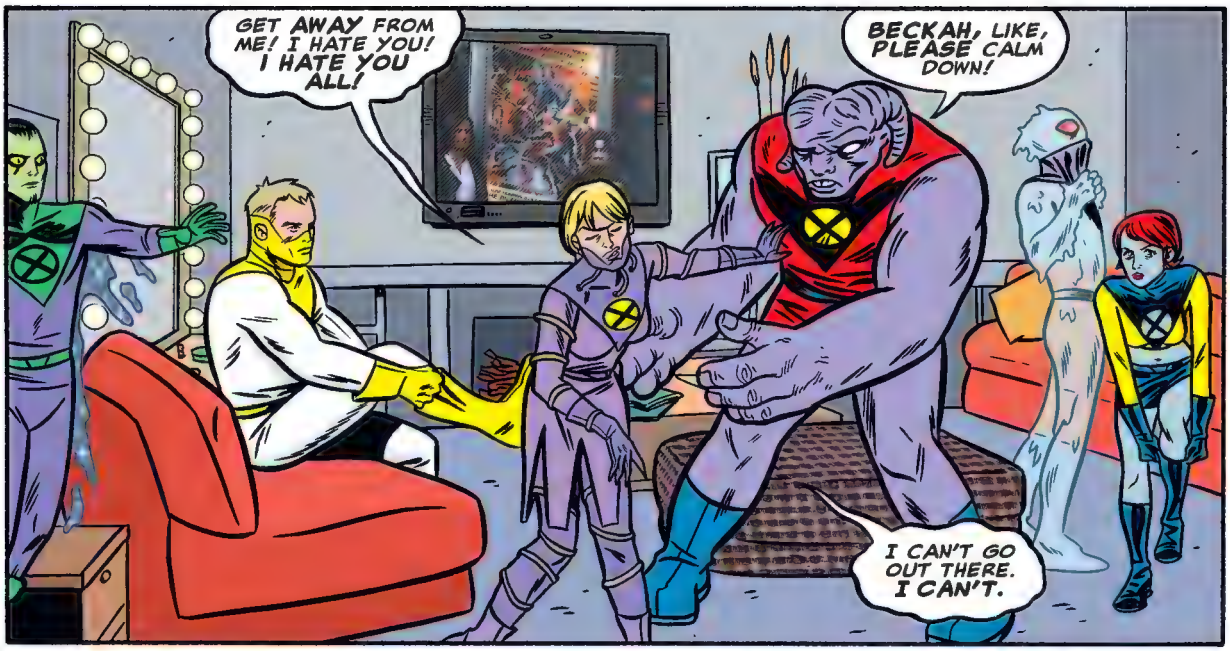
I'M JUST SAYING THAT... I'M JUST SAYIN'...
...HELL, I'M A BLACK MUTANT. IN THIS COUNTRY, THAT'S LIKE BEING BLACK WITH A LITTLE BLACK ADDED.

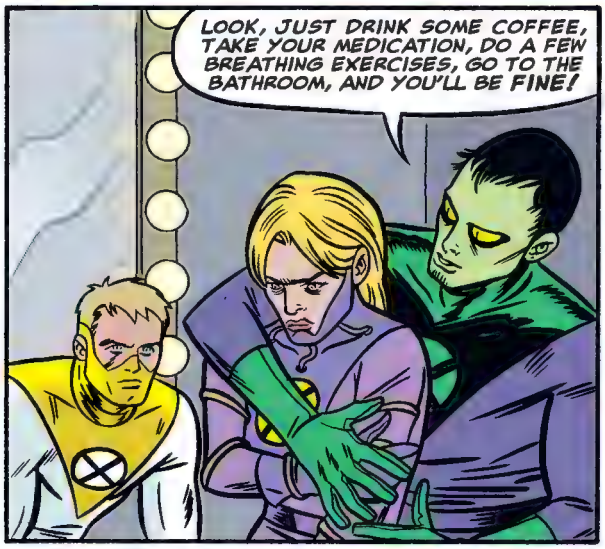
HAH!
WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP

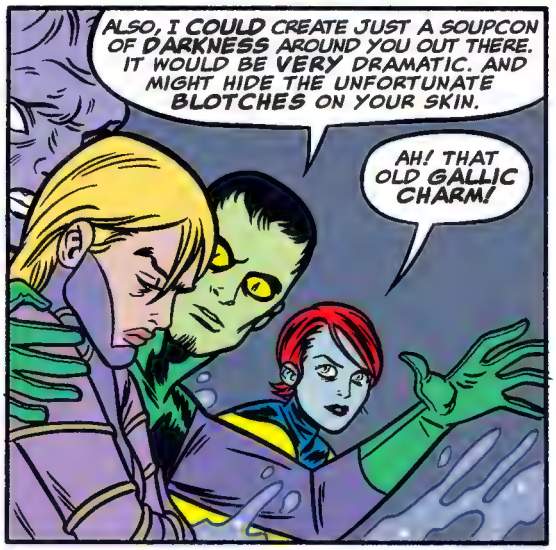
THIS IS THE POLICE. PUT YOUR HANDS IN THE AIR. YOU ARE UNDER ARREST.

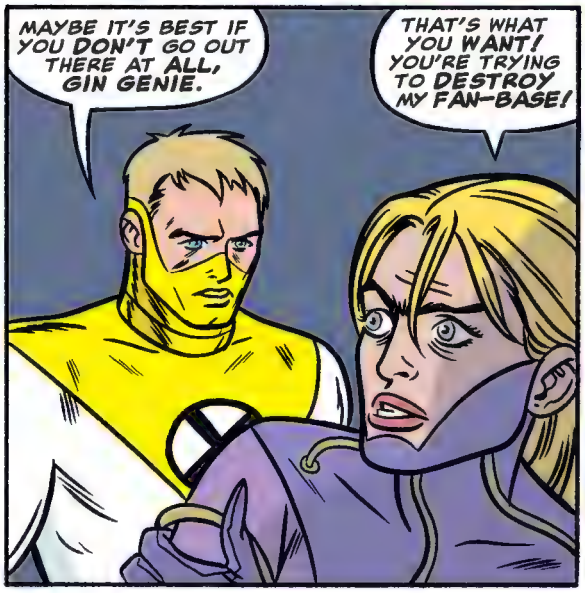

UNDER ARREST?! YOU GOTTA BE KIDDIN' ME! I'M A MEMBER OF THE X-FORCE!
I CAN DO WHATEVER THE HELL I WANT!


X-FORCE CAFÉ
HERE WE ARE IN SUNNY ORANGE COUNTY AT THE OPENING OF THE TWENTY-FIRST, X-FORCE CAFÉ!
AN OCCASION MADE POIGNANT BY ITS DEDICATION TO THE LATE AND ALREADY MUCH-LAMENTED SLUK.
AS A FITTING TRIBUTE TO THAT KIDDY-FAVORITE, A REPLICA OF SLUK HAS BEEN ERECTED.
TWENTY DOLLARS WILL ACTIVATE THE DEAR OLD MUTANT'S FACE THINGS--CAUSING THEM TO RELEASE A PLEASANTLY MILD ELECTRONIC PULSE...
SNIKT
HMM. NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL REFRESHING.
WHAT'S EVEN MORE REFRESHING IS THAT FIFTY PER CENT OF ALL PROFITS WILL BE DONATED TO SLUK'S FAVORITE CHARITIES!
WE'RE STILL WAITING FOR MEMBERS OF THE X-FORCE THEMSELVES TO SHOW UP. THEY'VE OBVIOUSLY BEEN DETAINED BY SOME SECRET MATTER OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE!

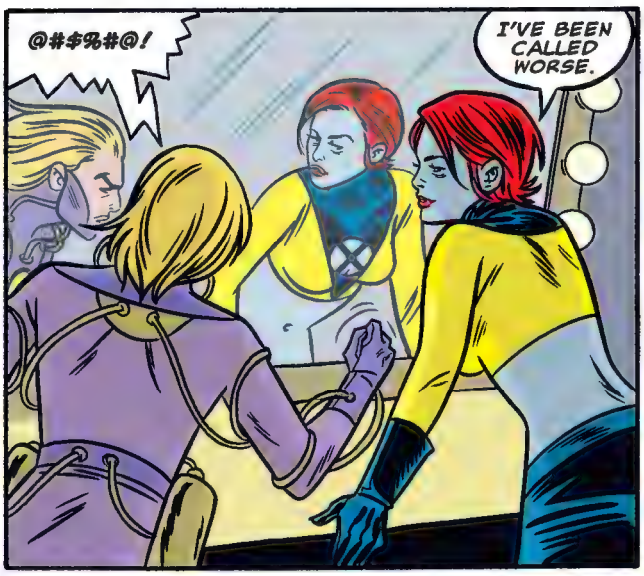

GET AWAY FROM ME! I HATE YOU! I HATE YOU ALL!
BECKAH, LIKE, PLEASE CALM DOWN!
I CAN'T GO OUT THERE. I CAN'T.

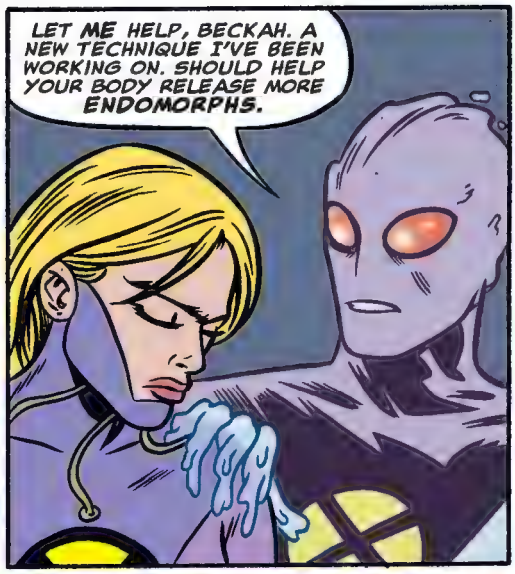

LOOK, JUST DRINK SOME COFFEE, TAKE YOUR MEDICATION, DO A FEW BREATHING EXERCISES, GO TO THE BATHROOM, AND YOU'LL BE FINE!

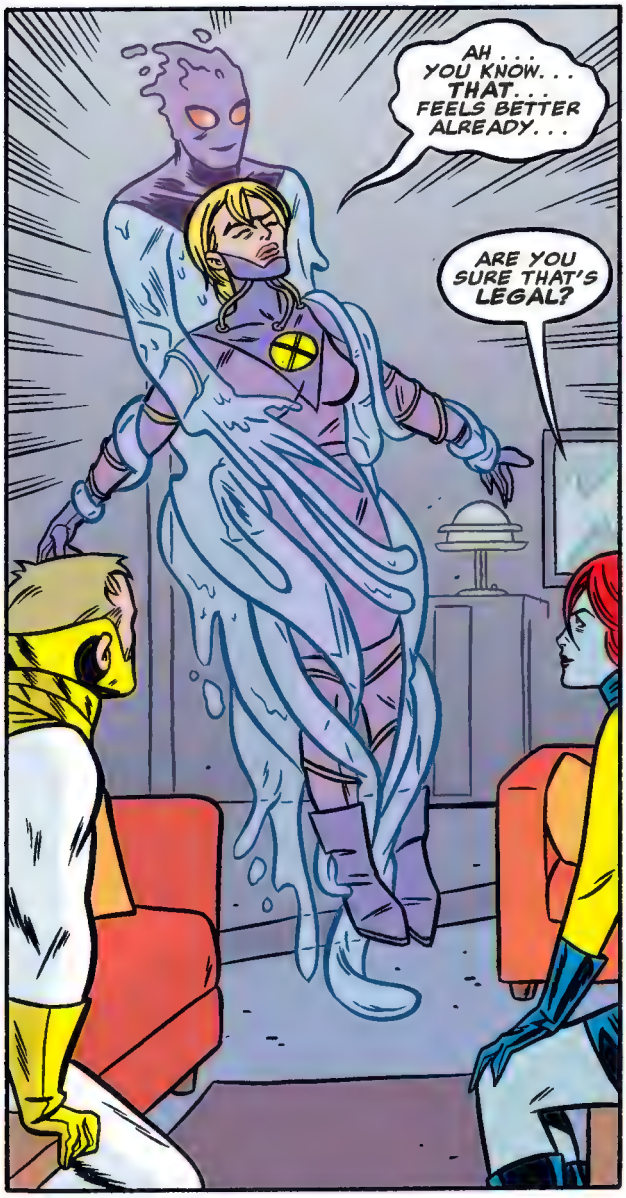

ALSO, I COULD CREATE JUST A SOUPCON OF DARKNESS AROUND YOU OUT THERE. IT WOULD BE VERY DRAMATIC. AND MIGHT HIDE THE UNFORTUNATE BLOTCHES ON YOUR SKIN.
AH! THAT OLD GALLIC CHARM!


MAYBE IT'S BEST IF YOU DON'T GO OUT THERE AT ALL, GIN GENIE.
THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT! YOU'RE TRYING TO DESTROY MY FAN-BASE!

YOUR FAN-BASE?
ADMITTING YOU'RE A FAN OF GIN GENIE IS LIKE POSTING YOUR A.A. MEMBERSHIP FILE ON THE INTERNET!

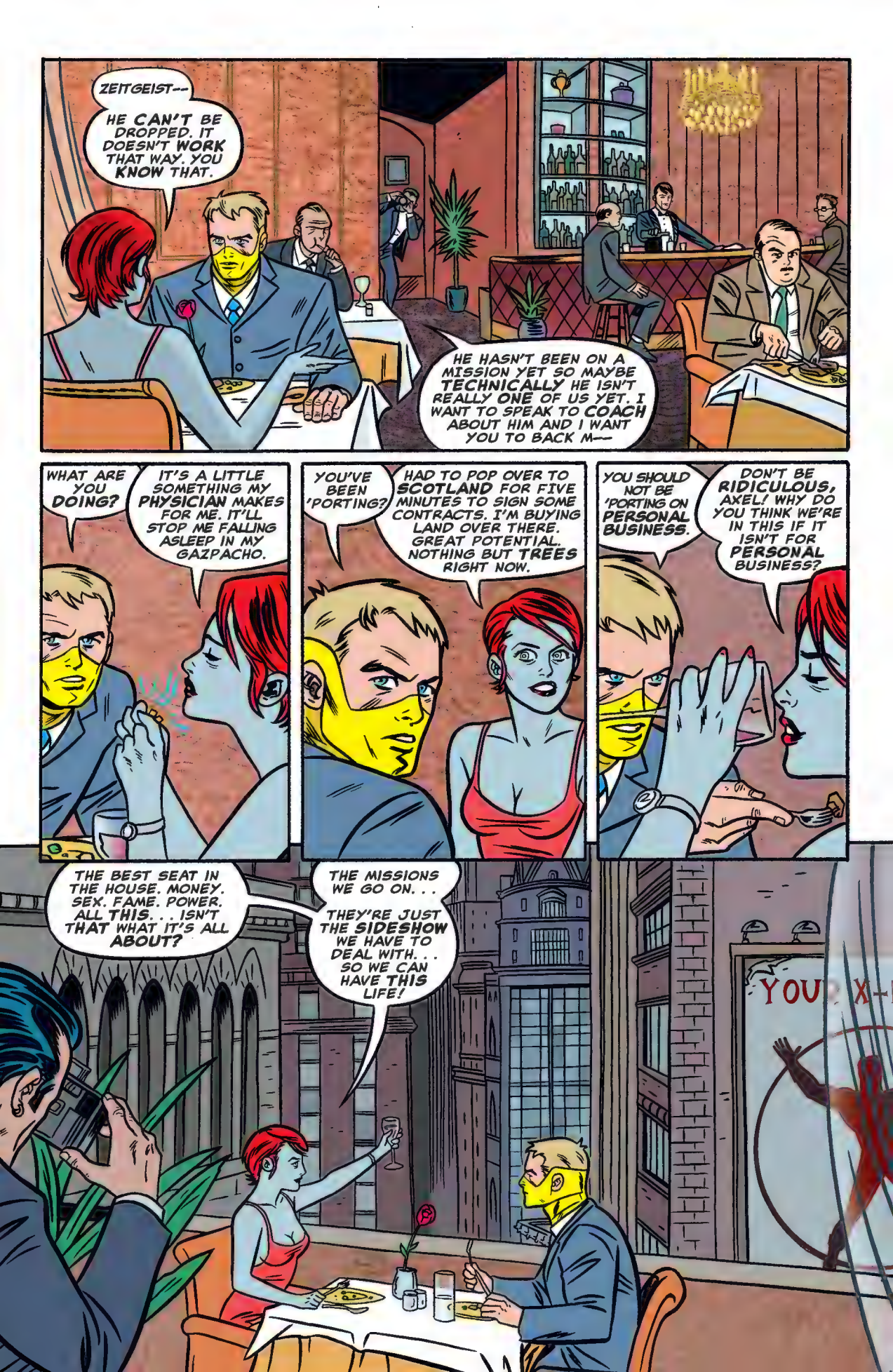

@#$%#@!
I'VE BEEN CALLED WORSE.

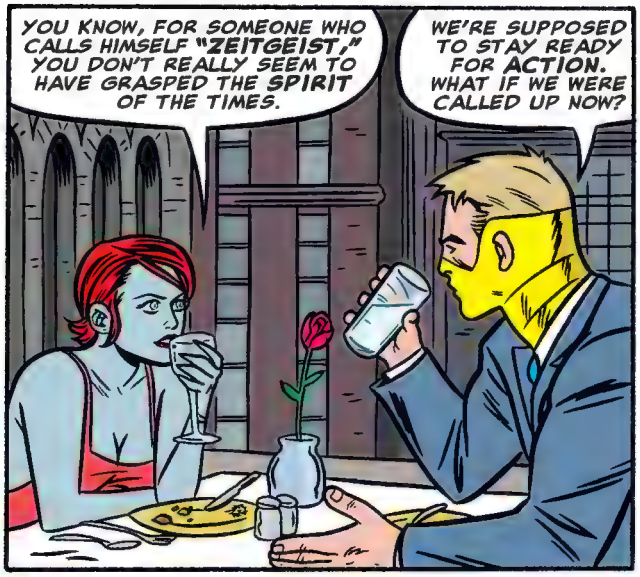

LET ME HELP, BECKAH. A NEW TECHNIQUE I'VE BEEN WORKING ON. SHOULD HELP YOUR BODY RELEASE MORE ENDOMORPHS.


AH . . . YOU KNOW. . . THAT. . . FEELS BETTER ALREADY. . .
ARE YOU SURE THAT'S LEGAL?

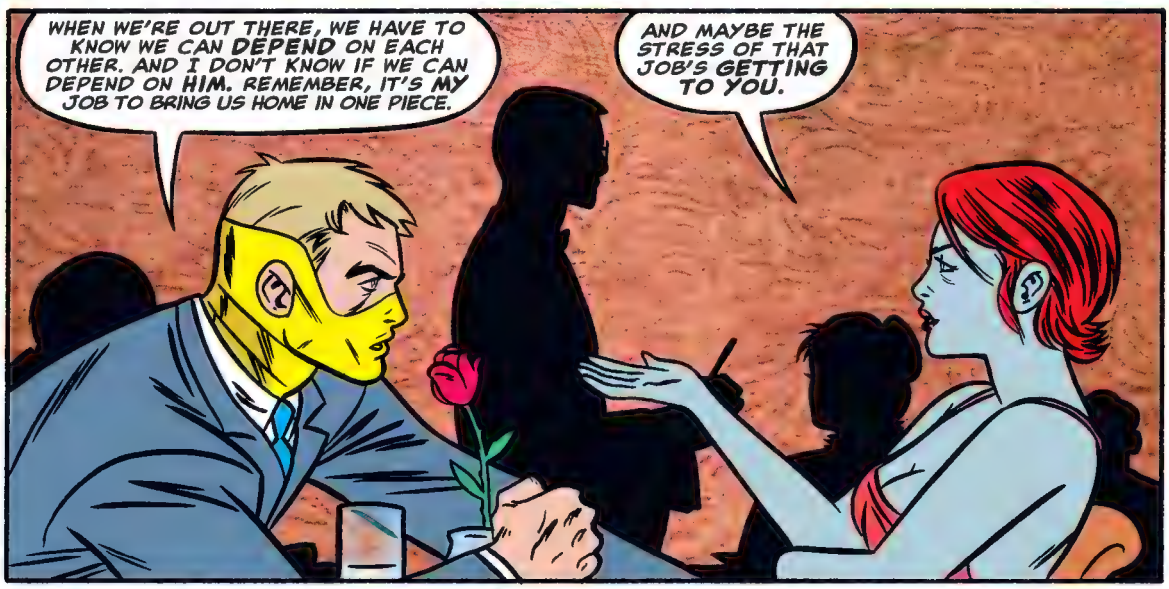
NUMBER ONE, I'D LIKE TO TALK. ABOUT MY ROLE.
YOUR ROLE?
HEY, AXEL, GET A LOAD OF THIS!

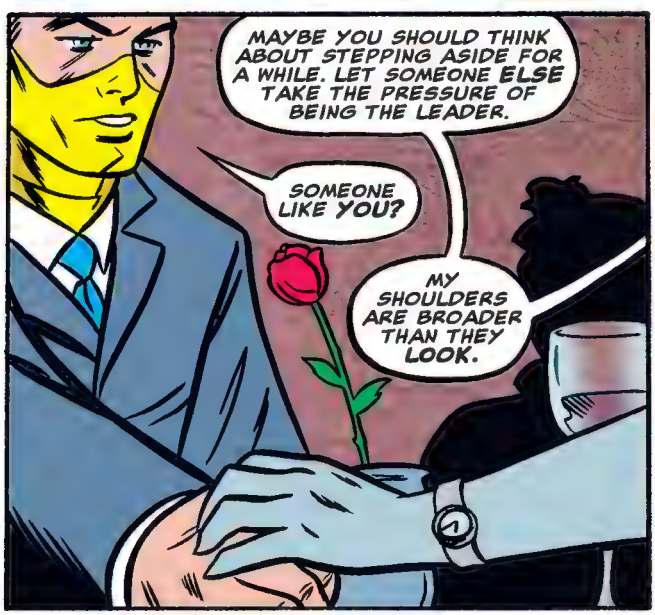
BLOWING OFF THE ROOF OF THE FOUR SEASONS HOTEL, X-FORCE ROOKIE TIKE ALICAR, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ANARCHIST, LAUNCHED INTO AN INCREDIBLE TIRADE AGAINST AXEL CLUNEY, BETTER KNOWN AS. . .
TIKE ALICAR


ZEITGEIST--
HE CAN'T BE DROPPED. IT DOESN'T WORK THAT WAY. YOU KNOW THAT.
HE HASN'T BEEN ON A MISSION YET SO MAYBE TECHNICALLY HE ISN'T REALLY ONE OF US YET. I WANT TO SPEAK TO COACH ABOUT HIM AND I WANT YOU TO BACK M--
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
IT'S A LITTLE SOMETHING MY PHYSICIAN MAKES FOR ME. IT'LL STOP ME FALLING ASLEEP IN MY GAZPACHO.
YOU'VE BEEN 'PORTING?
HAD TO POP OVER TO SCOTLAND FOR FIVE MINUTES TO SIGN SOME CONTRACTS. I'M BUYING LAND OVER THERE. GREAT POTENTIAL. NOTHING BUT TREES RIGHT NOW.
YOU SHOULD NOT BE 'PORTING ON PERSONAL BUSINESS.
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS, AXEL! WHY DO YOU THINK WE'RE IN THIS IF IT ISN'T FOR PERSONAL BUSINESS?
THE BEST SEAT IN THE HOUSE. MONEY. SEX. FAME. POWER. ALL THIS. . . ISN'T THAT WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT?
THE MISSIONS WE GO ON. . .
THEY'RE JUST THE SIDESHOW WE HAVE TO DEAL WITH. . . SO WE CAN HAVE THIS LIFE!


YOU KNOW, FOR SOMEONE WHO CALLS HIMSELF "ZEITGEIST," YOU DON'T REALLY SEEM TO HAVE GRASPED THE SPIRIT OF THE TIMES.
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO STAY READY FOR ACTION. WHAT IF WE WERE CALLED UP NOW?

THEN I'D BREAK OPEN ANOTHER AMPULE. WHY ARE YOU SO UPTIGHT THESE DAYS, AXEL?
AND WHY ARE YOU SO DOWN ON TIKE? I KNOW THAT THING WITH THE FOUR SEASONS WAS A LITTLE EXTREME, BUT, HEY, NONE OF US ARE SAINTS!


WHEN WE'RE OUT THERE, WE HAVE TO KNOW WE CAN DEPEND ON EACH OTHER. AND I DON'T KNOW IF WE CAN DEPEND ON HIM. REMEMBER, IT'S MY JOB TO BRING US HOME IN ONE PIECE.
AND MAYBE THE STRESS OF THAT JOB'S GETTING TO YOU.


MAYBE YOU SHOULD THINK ABOUT STEPPING ASIDE FOR A WHILE. LET SOMEONE ELSE TAKE THE PRESSURE OF BEING THE LEADER.
SOMEONE LIKE YOU?
MY SHOULDERS ARE BROADER THAN THEY LOOK.

SEEMS LIKE I MIGHT NEED THAT OTHER AMPULE, AFTER ALL.
BEE-DEEP

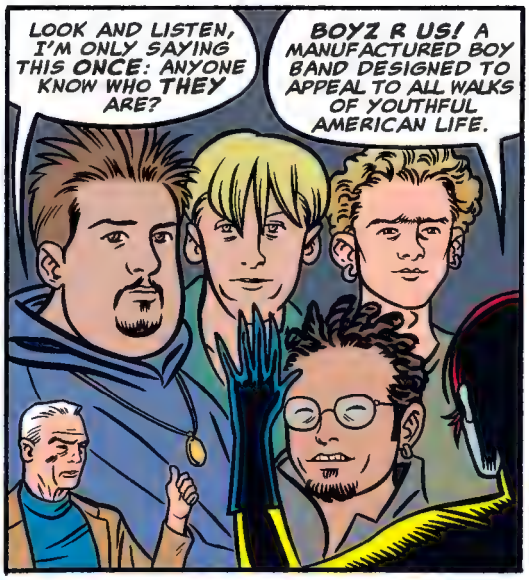
I THOUGHT THAT KIND OF STUFF WAS EXPECTED OF ME!
SANTA MONICA.
Loyola
Loyola

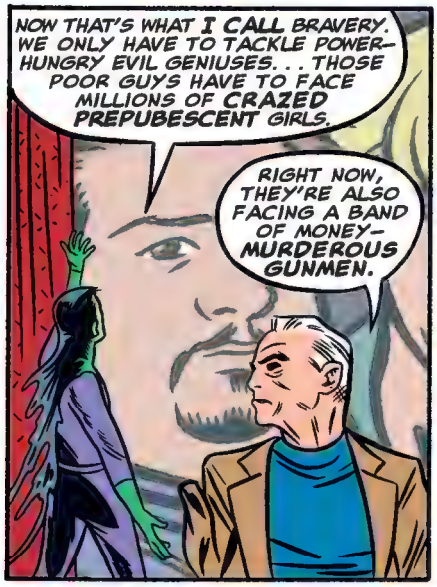
INTERNAL CONFLICT. STRUGGLES FOR ASCENDANCY. PERSONAL ENMITIES. ISN'T THAT THE KIND OF THING THAT KEEPS PEOPLE INTERESTED IN US? I MEAN, WE CAN'T BE FIGHTING BAD GUYS ALL THE TIME.

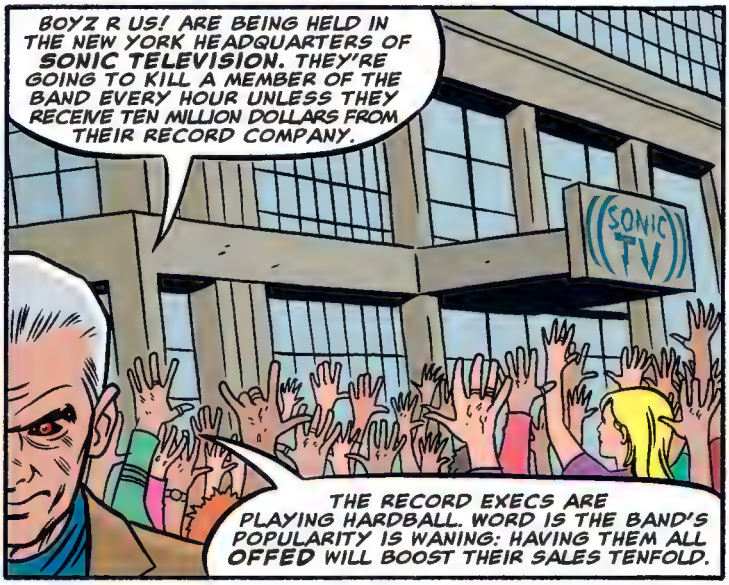
YOU'VE BEEN WITH US FOR FIVE MINUTES, ALICAR. DON'T TRY TO TELL US HOW WE SHOULD BEHAVE.
I'M GETTING A PARANOID VIBE. WHAT'S UP WITH YOU PEOPLE? YOU'VE ALL GOT SUCH. . . CHIPS ON YOUR SHOULDERS.

OKAY, CHILDREN, NURSERY HOUR IS OVER. WE'VE GOT A JOB TO DO.
HOORAY.
DON'T GET TOO EXCITED, EDIE. THIS IS A LONG WAY FROM BEING A MISSION IMPOSSIBLE.
SEE, OUR FOCUS GROUPS SUGGEST THAT SOME OF YOUR ADORING PUBLIC ARE GETTING A LITTLE RESENTFUL OF THE KINDS OF LIFESTYLES YOU GUYS LEAD.
THEY'RE FINDING IT A BIT HARD TO EMPATHIZE WITH YOU.

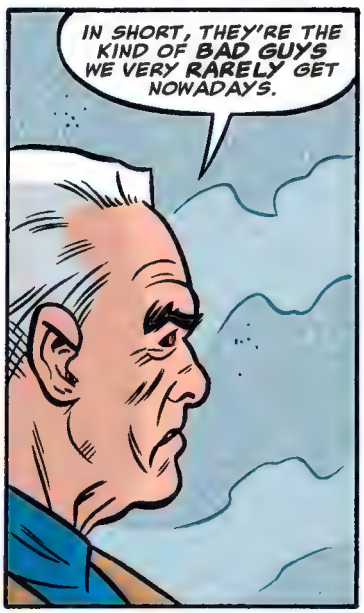
WHAT WE NEED IS A NICE, CLEAN, MEDIA EVENT: THE GOOD GUYS WHIPPING THE BAD GUYS.
AND WE ARE . . .
VERY FUNNY.
EXI

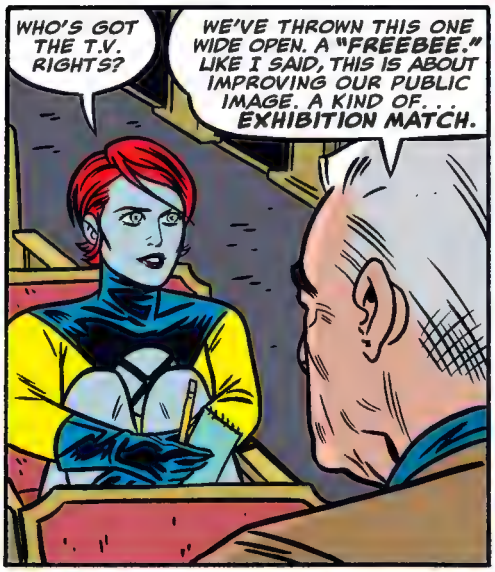

LOOK AND LISTEN, I'M ONLY SAYING THIS ONCE: ANYONE KNOW WHO THEY ARE?
BOYZ R US! A MANUFACTURED BOY BAND DESIGNED TO APPEAL TO ALL WALKS OF YOUTHFUL AMERICAN LIFE.

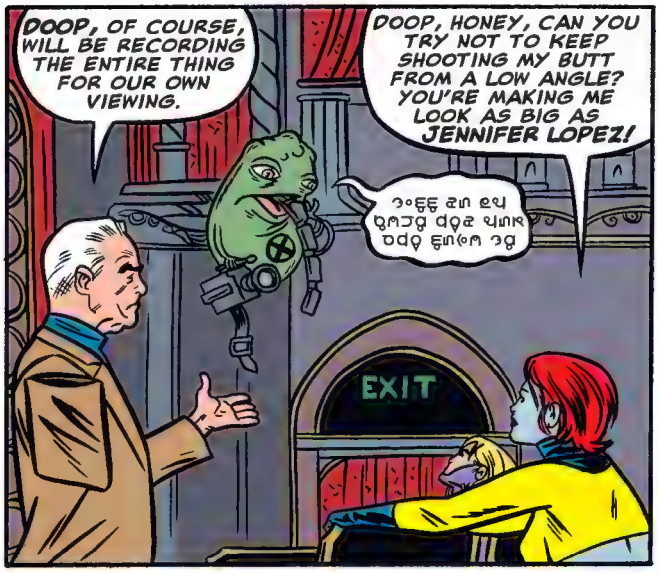

NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL BRAVERY. WE ONLY HAVE TO TACKLE POWER-HUNGRY EVIL GENIUSES. . . THOSE POOR GUYS HAVE TO FACE MILLIONS OF CRAZED PREPUBESCENT GIRLS.
RIGHT NOW, THEY'RE ALSO FACING A BAND OF MONEY-MURDEROUS GUNMEN.

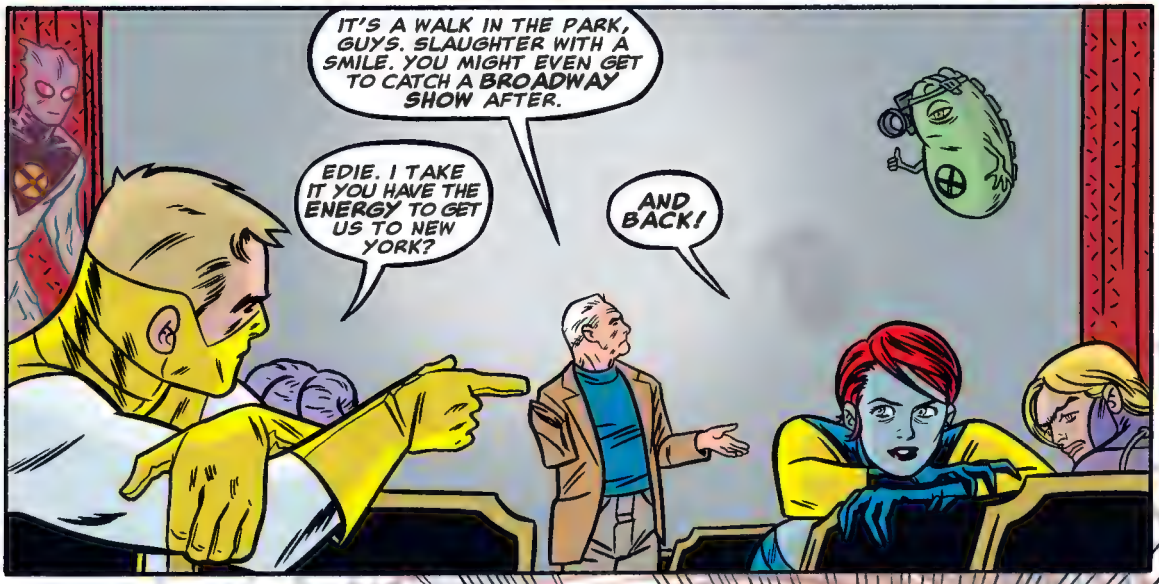

BOYZ R US! ARE BEING HELD IN THE NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS OF SONIC TELEVISION. THEY'RE GOING TO KILL A MEMBER OF THE BAND EVERY HOUR UNLESS THEY RECEIVE TEN MILLION DOLLARS FROM THEIR RECORD COMPANY.
SONIC TV
THE RECORD EXECS ARE PLAYING HARDBALL. WORD IS THE BAND'S POPULARITY IS WANING: HAVING THEM ALL OFFED WILL BOOST THEIR SALES TENFOLD.

THEY'VE ALREADY KILLED THE SHY ONE WHO WRITES THE SONGS. NEXT COMES THE GUY WITH THE DREADS.
THESE GUYS ARE DESPERATE. THEY HAVE NO POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS, NO SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP APPEAL.


IN SHORT, THEY'RE THE KIND OF BAD GUYS WE VERY RARELY GET NOWADAYS.


WHO'S GOT THE T.V. RIGHTS?
WE'VE THROWN THIS ONE WIDE OPEN. A "FREEBEE." LIKE I SAID, THIS IS ABOUT IMPROVING OUR PUBLIC IMAGE. A KIND OF... EXHIBITION MATCH.

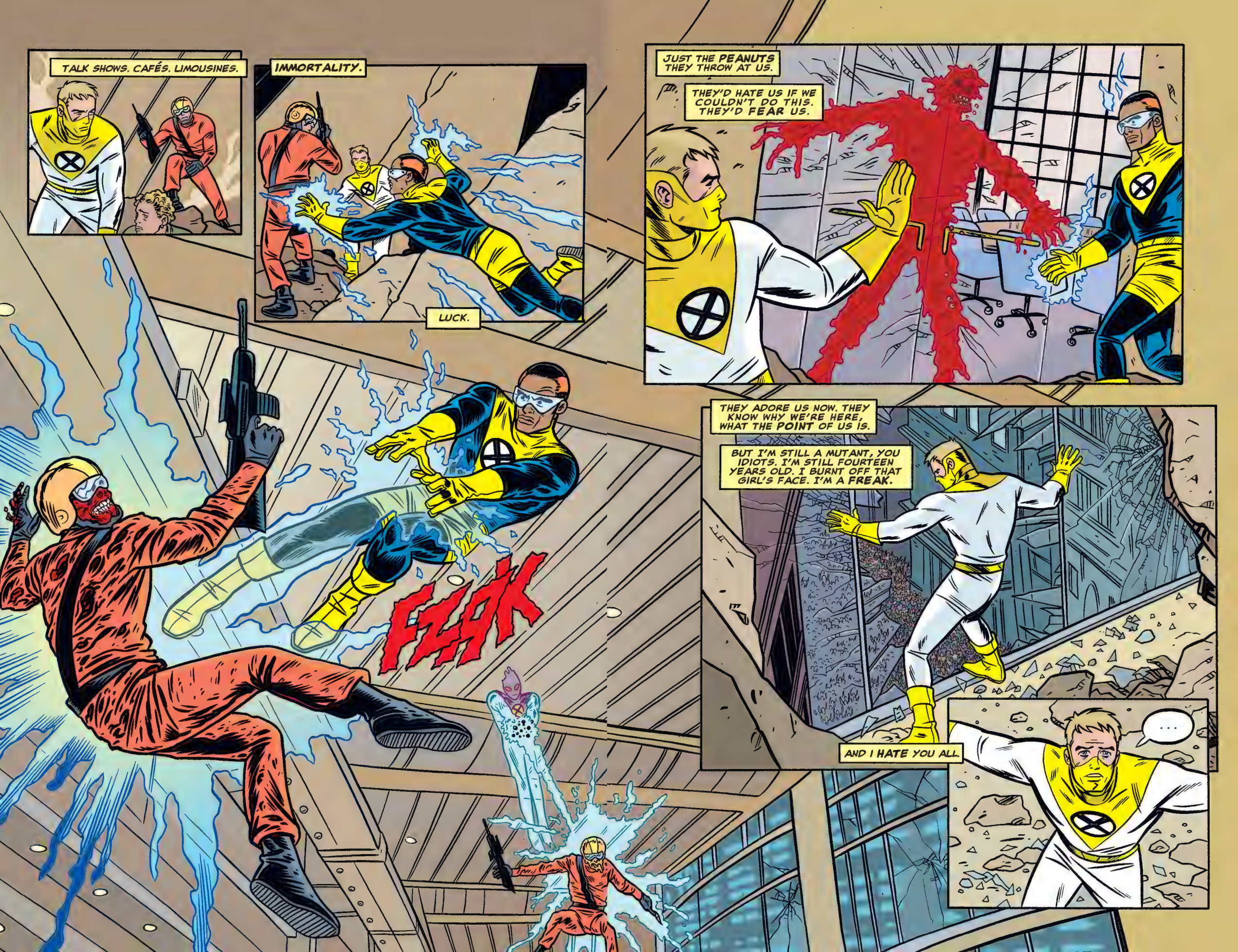

DOOP, OF COURSE, WILL BE RECORDING THE ENTIRE THING FOR OUR OWN VIEWING.
DOOP, HONEY, CAN YOU TRY NOT TO KEEP SHOOTING MY BUTT FROM A LOW ANGLE? YOU'RE MAKING ME LOOK AS BIG AS JENNIFER LOPEZ!
EXIT


IT'S A WALK IN THE PARK, GUYS. SLAUGHTER WITH A SMILE. YOU MIGHT EVEN GET TO CATCH A BROADWAY SHOW AFTER.
EDIE. I TAKE IT YOU HAVE THE ENERGY TO GET US TO NEW YORK?
AND BACK!

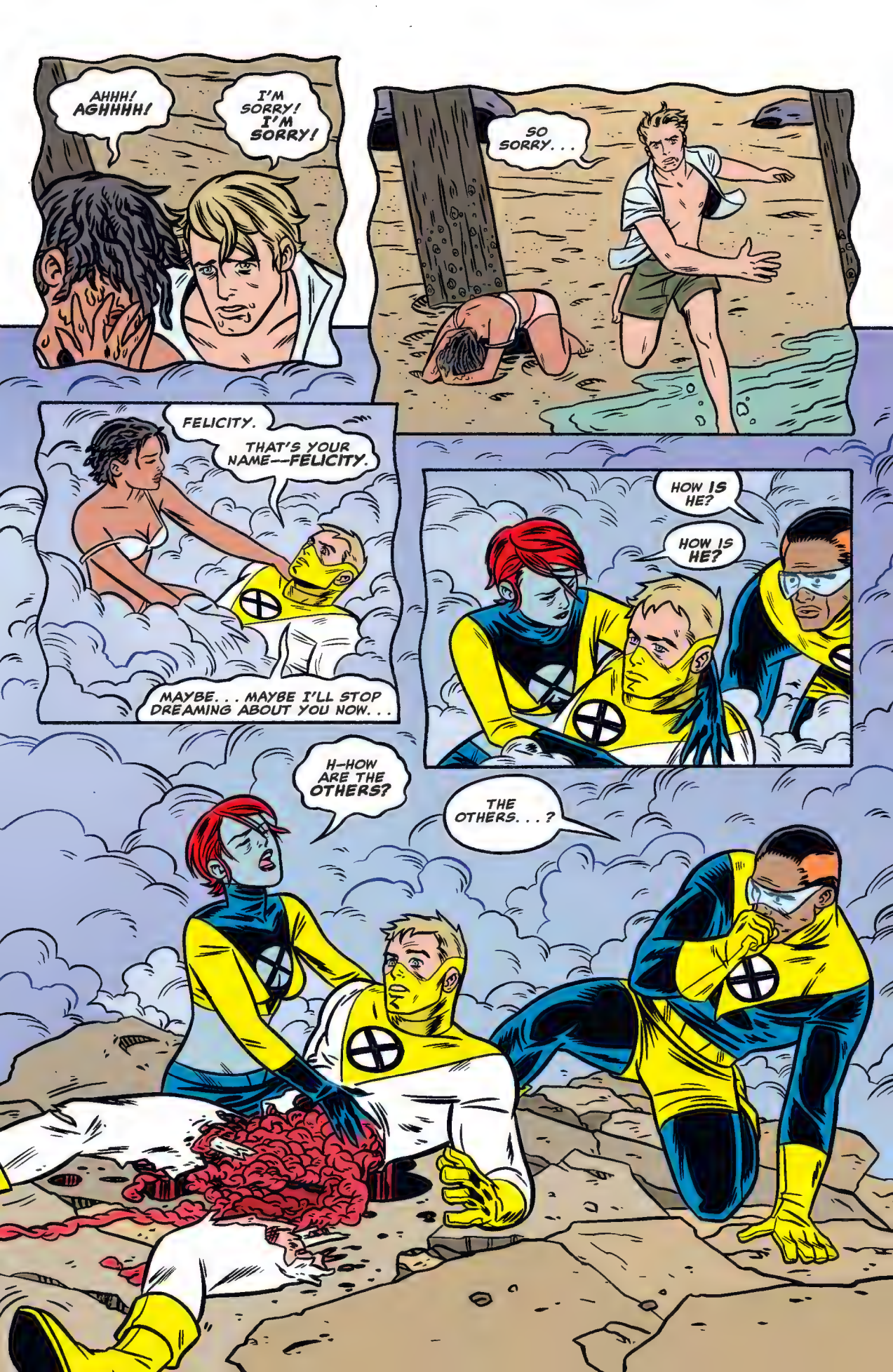
NUMBER ONE, CAN I HAVE A WORD...?
LATER, BATTERING RAM.

EDIE...

BECKAH! LET'S SHAKE THINGS UP A LITTLE!
SHAKEN AND STIRRED!
DO MY BLOTCHES SHOW?
WHAT BLOTCHES?
YOU GO, GIRL!
MONEY. FAME. SEX.
CARS. HOUSES. CHAMPAGNE.

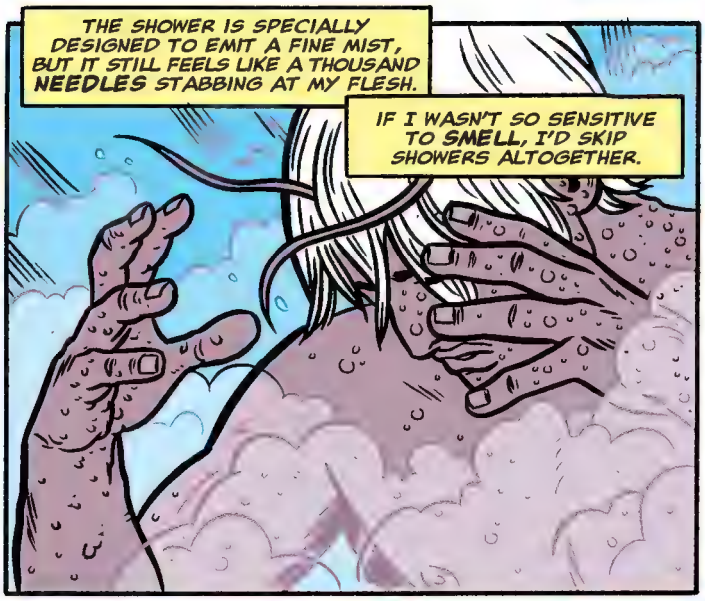

TALK SHOWS. CAFÉS. LIMOUSINES.
IMMORTALITY.
LUCK.
JUST THE PEANUTS THEY THROW AT US.
THEY'D HATE US IF WE COULDN'T DO THIS. THEY'D FEAR US.
FZAK
THEY ADORE US NOW. THEY KNOW WHY WE'RE HERE, WHAT THE POINT OF US IS.
BUT I'M STILL A MUTANT, YOU IDIOTS. I'M STILL FOURTEEN YEARS OLD. I BURNT OFF THAT GIRL'S FACE. I'M A FREAK.
AND I HATE YOU ALL.
...

BOSS, MY ROLE, I FEEL I OUGHTA—
SSSSVRRRMMMM
BLAM-BOOM

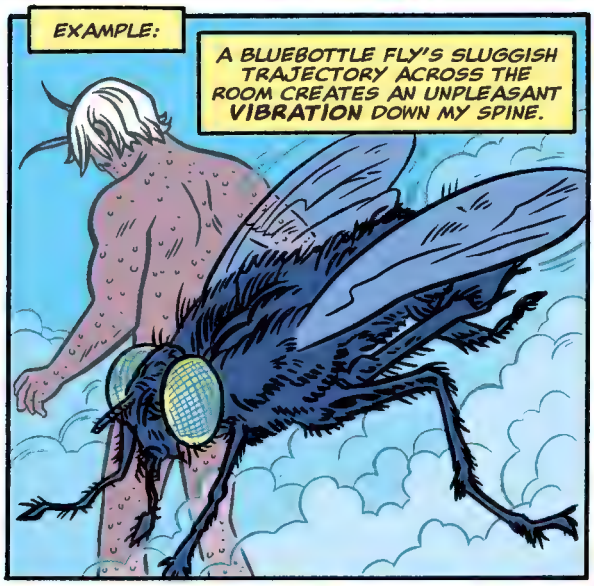

AHHH! AGHHHH!
I'M SORRY! I'M SORRY!
SO SORRY...
FELICITY.
THAT'S YOUR NAME—FELICITY.
MAYBE... MAYBE I'LL STOP DREAMING ABOUT YOU NOW...
HOW IS HE?
HOW IS HE?
H-HOW ARE THE OTHERS?
THE OTHERS...?

THERE ARE NO OTHERS.
SONIC

X-FORCE #117

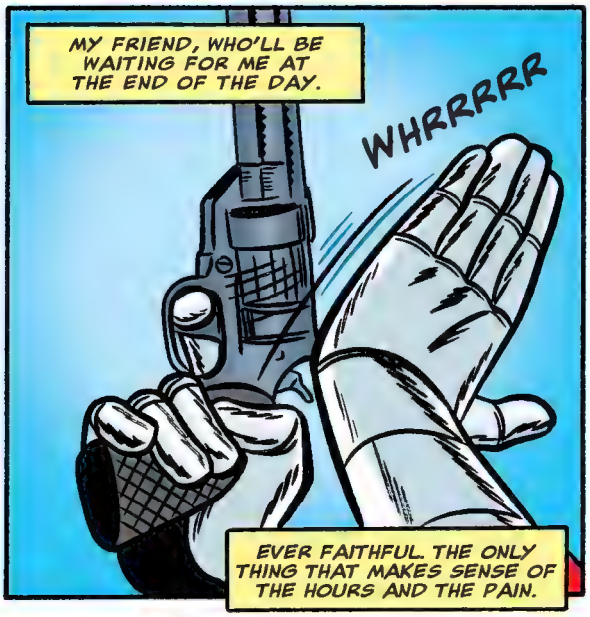

THE SHOWER IS SPECIALLY DESIGNED TO EMIT A FINE MIST, BUT IT STILL FEELS LIKE A THOUSAND NEEDLES STABBING AT MY FLESH.
IF I WASN'T SO SENSITIVE TO SMELL, I'D SKIP SHOWERS ALTOGETHER.

TO THINK I USED TO LIVE WITHOUT THE SUIT.
MY MIND HAS GROWN LAZY. THE DISCIPLINES I USED TO PROTECT MYSELF WITH, RUSTY.


EXAMPLE:
A BLUEBOTTLE FLY'S SLUGGISH TRAJECTORY ACROSS THE ROOM CREATES AN UNPLEASANT VIBRATION DOWN MY SPINE.

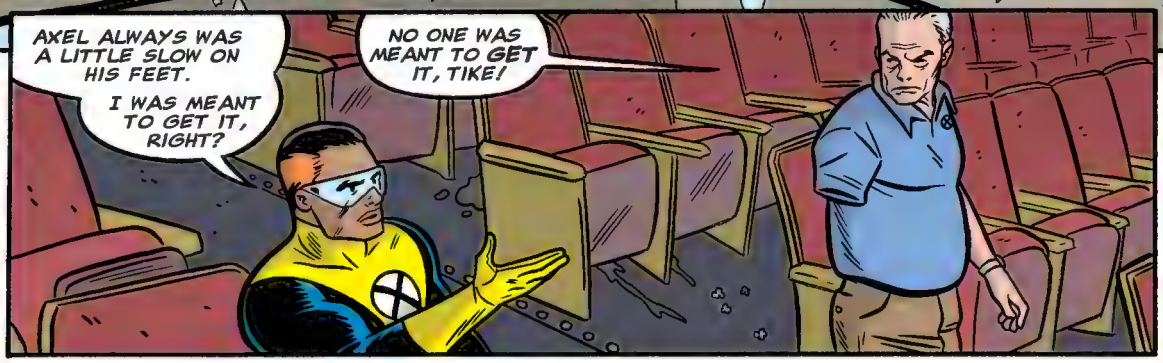
BUT NOW I'M SLIPPING IT ON, MY ARMOR AND SHIELD, MUMBLING MY DAILY PRAYER OF THANKS TO PROFESSOR X.

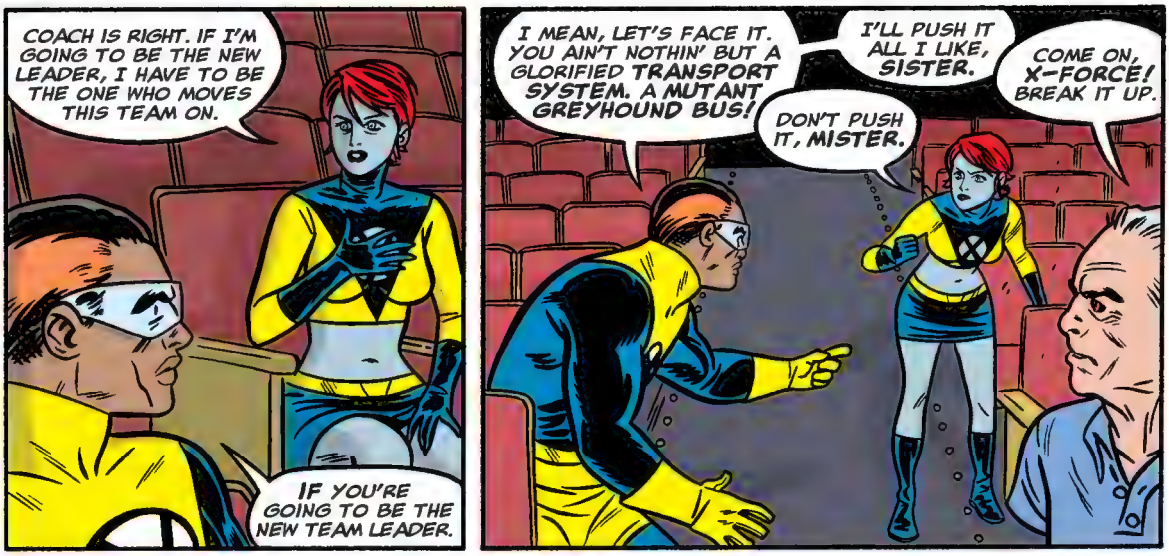
PEPARING FOR MY OTHER DAILY RITUAL.

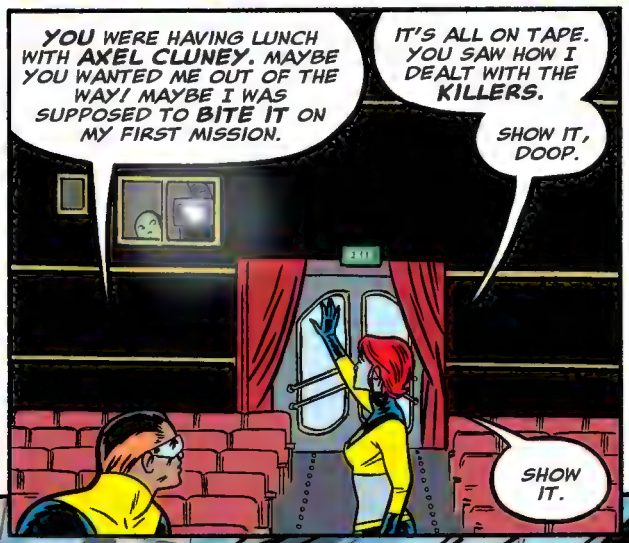

MY FRIEND, WHO'LL BE WAITING FOR ME AT THE END OF THE DAY.
WHRRRRR
EVER FAITHFUL. THE ONLY THING THAT MAKES SENSE OF THE HOURS AND THE PAIN.

Peter Milligan-Writer
Michael "Zane" Allred-Artist
MISTER SENSITIVE
Laura Allred-Colorist
Michael Allred & Blambot-Letters
John Miesegaes-Assistant Editor
Axel Alonso-Editor
Joe Quesada-Chief
Bill Jemas-President

"SEE!
"IT WAS MEANT FOR ME!
"ZEITGEIST JUST GOT IN THE WAY, MAN!"




COACH IS RIGHT. IF I'M GOING TO BE THE NEW LEADER, I HAVE TO BE THE ONE WHO MOVES THIS TEAM ON.
IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE THE NEW TEAM LEADER.
I MEAN, LET'S FACE IT. YOU AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT A GLORIFIED TRANSPORT SYSTEM. A MUTANT GREYHOUND BUS!
I'LL PUSH IT ALL I LIKE, SISTER.
DON'T PUSH IT, MISTER.
COME ON, X-FORCE! BREAK IT UP.


YOU WERE HAVING LUNCH WITH AXEL CLUNEY. MAYBE YOU WANTED ME OUT OF THE WAY! MAYBE I WAS SUPPOSED TO BITE IT ON MY FIRST MISSION.
IT'S ALL ON TAPE. YOU SAW HOW I DEALT WITH THE KILLERS.
SHOW IT, DOOP.
SHOW IT.

"AXEL KIND OF GROANED WHEN I LET GO OF HIM. BUT I HAD TO. I KNEW I HAD A RESPONSIBILITY.
"I WAS THE SENIOR X-FORCE MEMBER NOW.

"ANY PAYBACK CAME DOWN TO ME.

"GLORIFIED TRANSPORT SYSTEM?

"TELL THAT TO THE **FLESH** AND **BONE** THEY SCRAPED OFF THE SIDEWALK!"

SO YOU GOT **THE DROP** ON A FEW OF THE BAD GUYS. BIG DEAL.

BY SEPARATING THEM FROM THEIR **SPINAL CORDS?**

I WAS THE ONE TRYING TO FIND OUT WHO THEY **WORKED** FOR.

SO I GOT A **LITTLE** CARRIED AWAY.

OR **MAYBE** YOU DELIBERATELY GOT RID OF THEM, SO THEY COULDN'T **TALK.**

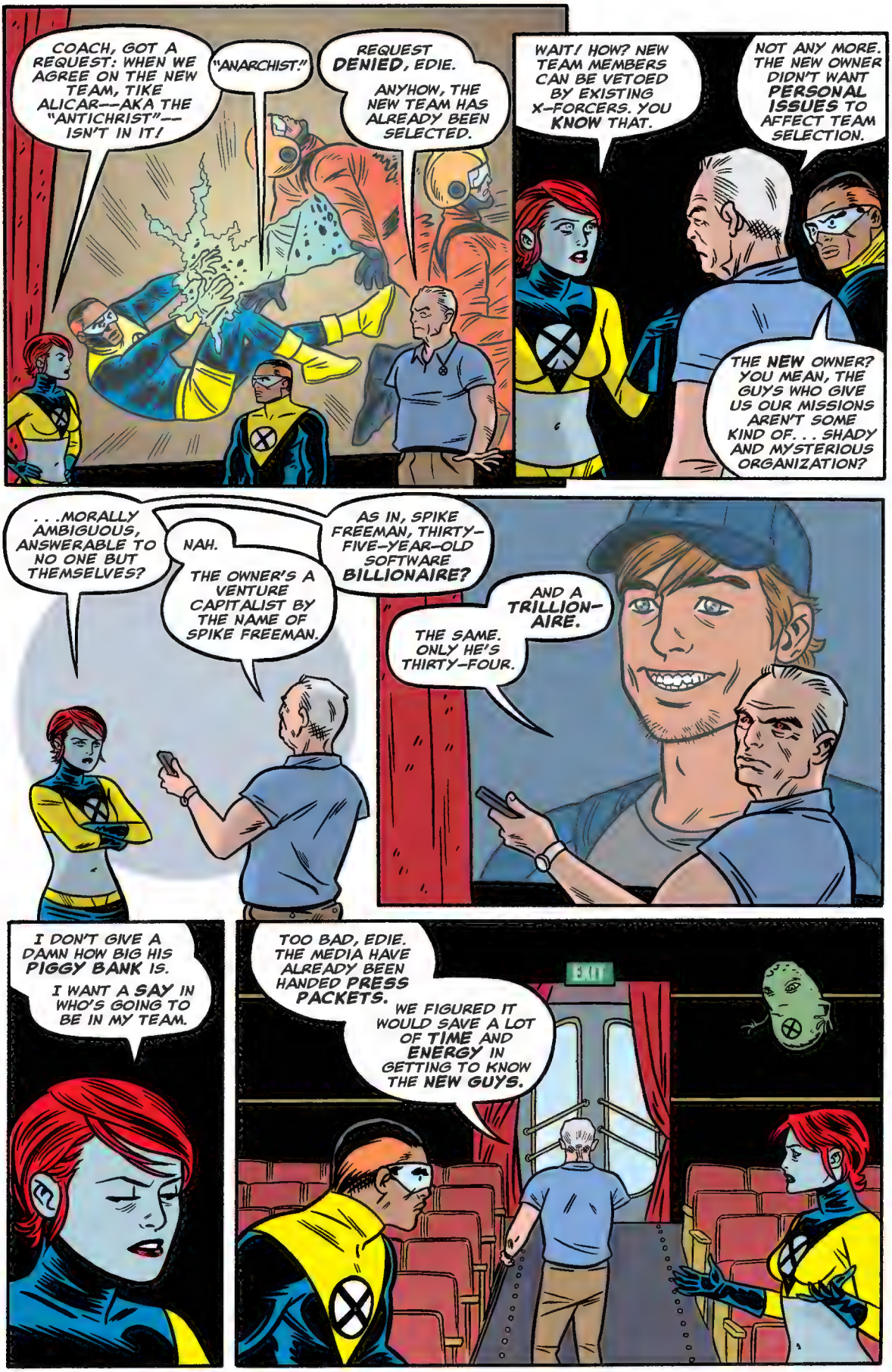
NOW **THAT'S** ONE HELL OF AN **ACCUSATION.**

I **JUST** JOINED X-FORCE. WHY WOULD I WANT TO **ICE** EVERYONE?

HOW ABOUT SO YOU COULD HIRE YOUR OWN GUYS? BE LEADER OF A **NEW** X-FORCE SHAPED IN YOUR OWN IMAGE?

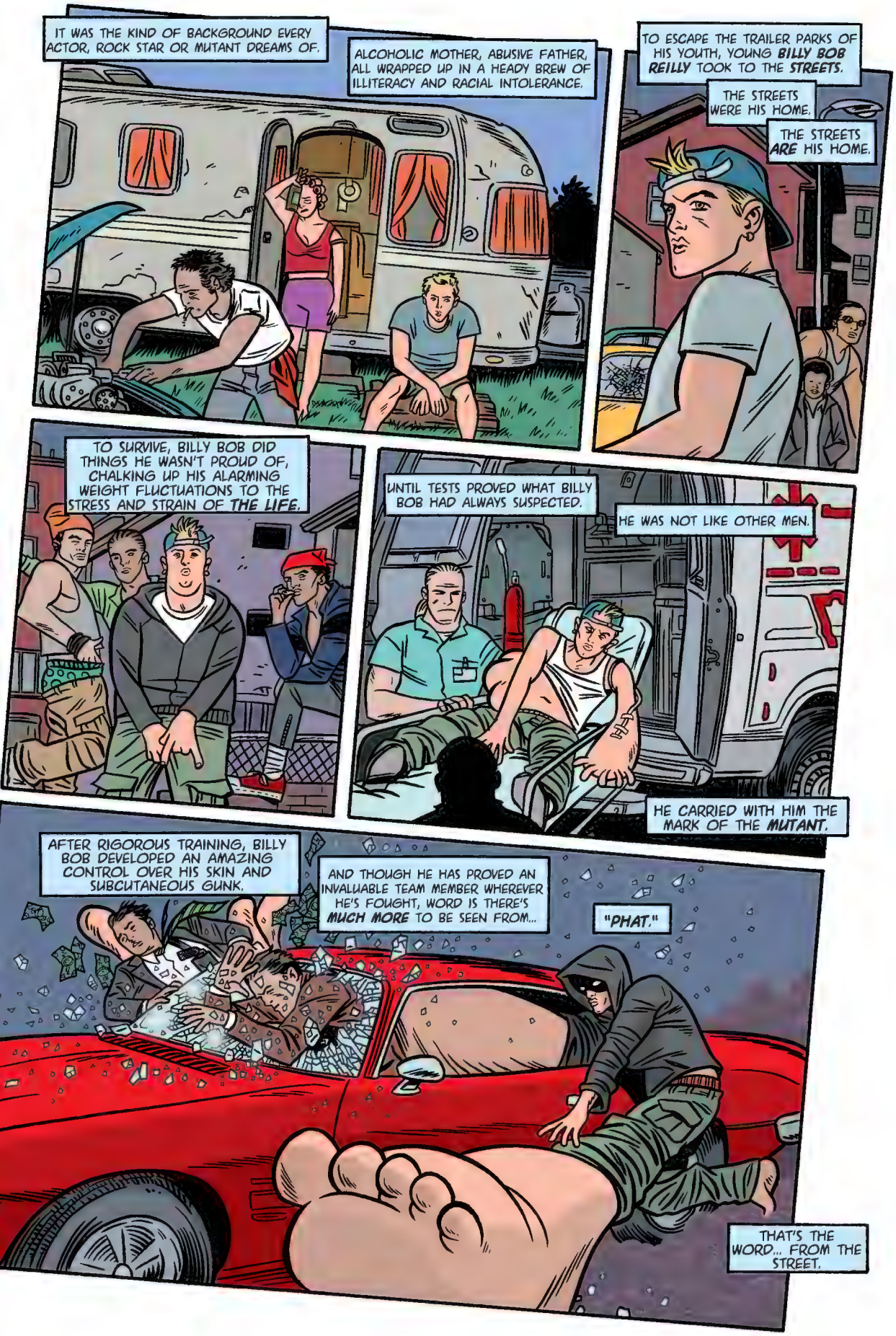
HMM, WHEN YOU TALK ABOUT IT LIKE **THAT,** IT DON'T SOUND HALF BAD.

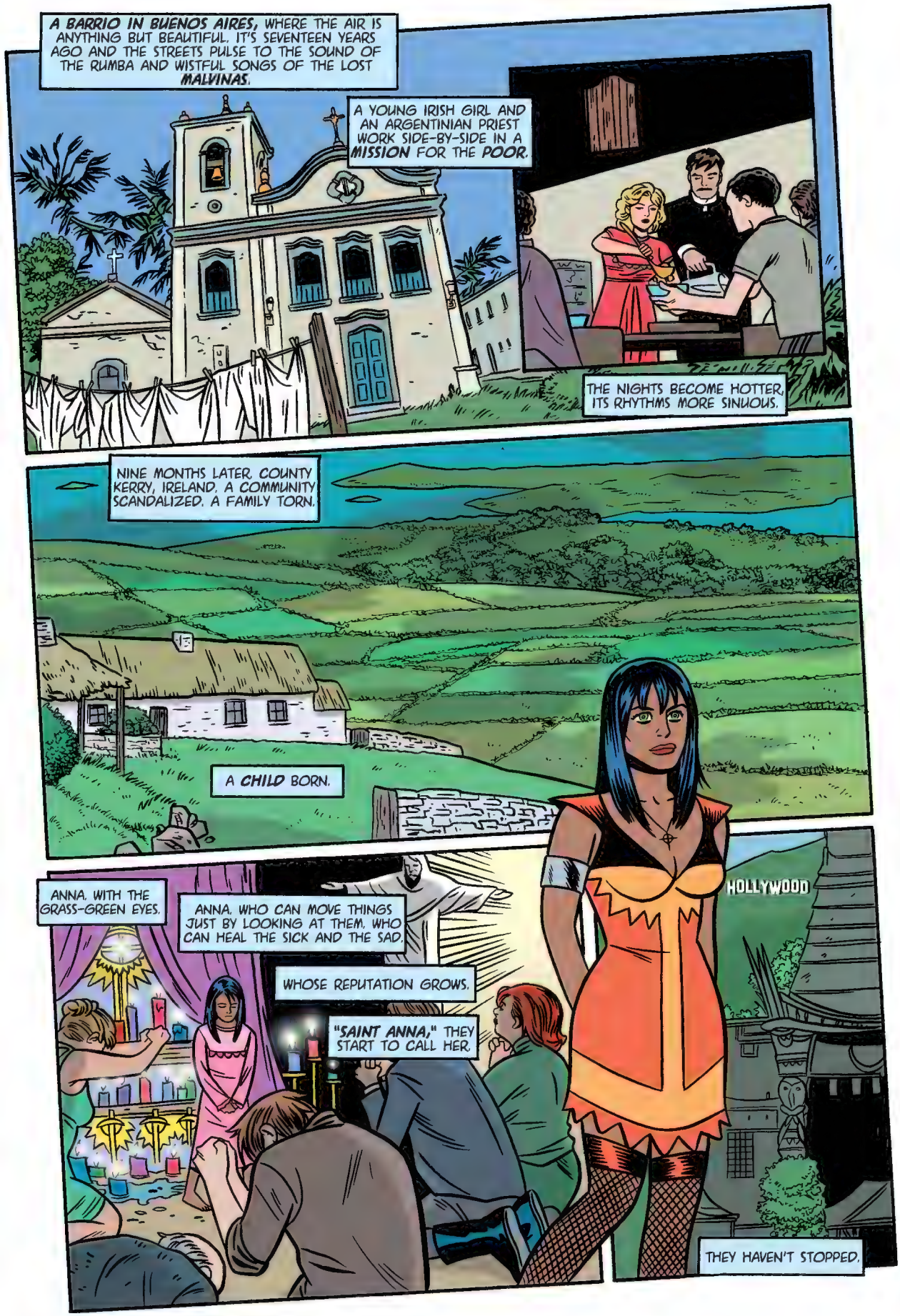
SEE? HE DOESN'T TAKE ANYTHING **SERIOUSLY.** NOT EVEN **THIS.**

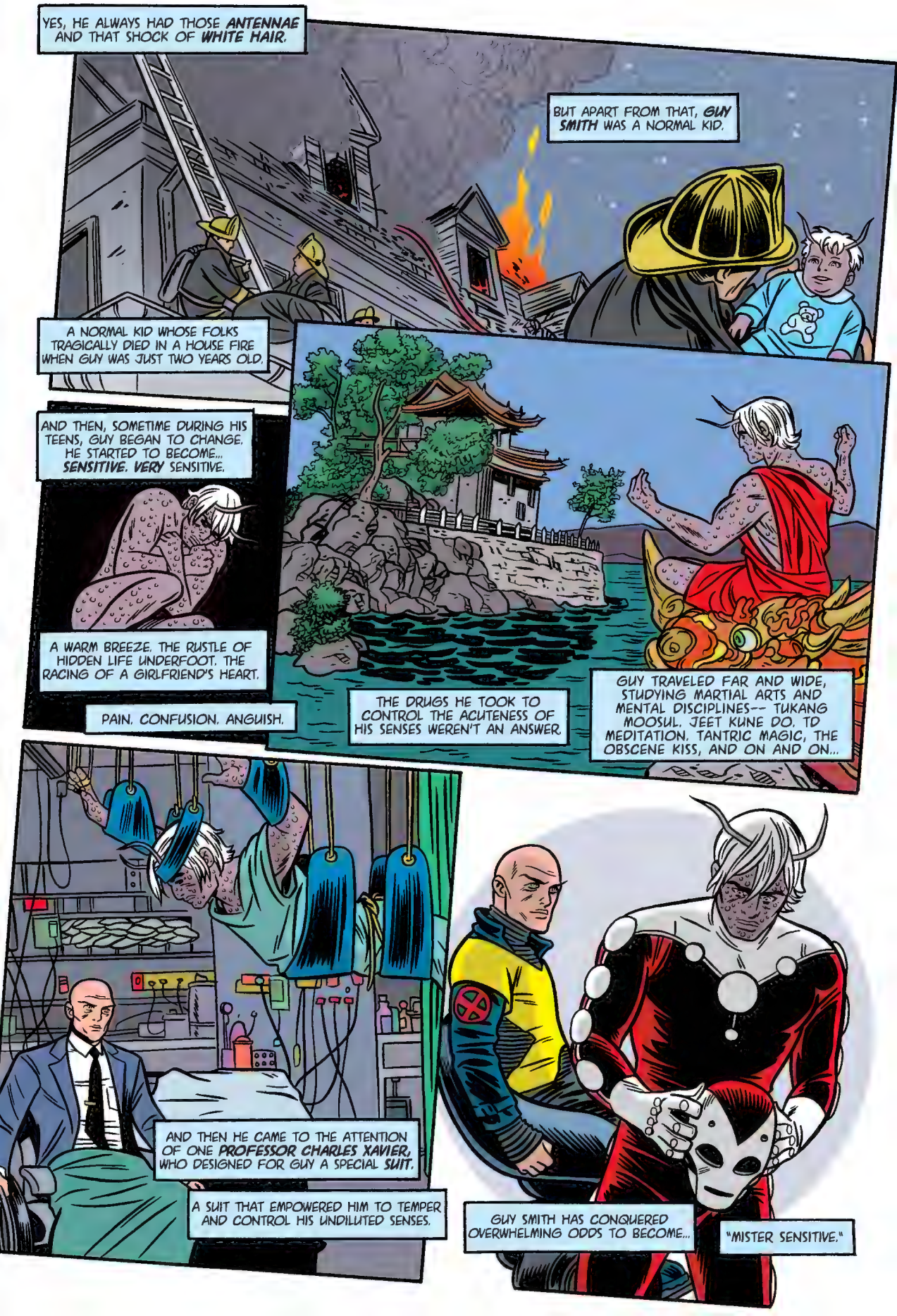

COACH, GOT A REQUEST: WHEN WE AGREE ON THE NEW TEAM, TIKE ALICAR--AKA THE "ANTICHRIST"--ISN'T IN IT!
"ANARCHIST."
REQUEST DENIED, EDIE.
ANYHOW, THE NEW TEAM HAS ALREADY BEEN SELECTED.
WAIT! HOW? NEW TEAM MEMBERS CAN BE VETOED BY EXISTING X-FORCERS. YOU KNOW THAT.
NOT ANY MORE. THE NEW OWNER DIDN'T WANT PERSONAL ISSUES TO AFFECT TEAM SELECTION.
THE NEW OWNER? YOU MEAN, THE GUYS WHO GIVE US OUR MISSIONS AREN'T SOME KIND OF. . . SHADY AND MYSTERIOUS ORGANIZATION?
. . .MORALLY AMBIGUOUS, ANSWERABLE TO NO ONE BUT THEMSELVES?
NAH.
THE OWNER'S A VENTURE CAPITALIST BY THE NAME OF SPIKE FREEMAN.
AS IN, SPIKE FREEMAN, THIRTY-FIVE-YEAR-OLD SOFTWARE BILLIONAIRE?
AND A TRILLIONAIRE.
THE SAME. ONLY HE'S THIRTY-FOUR.
I DON'T GIVE A DAMN HOW BIG HIS PIGGY BANK IS.
I WANT A SAY IN WHO'S GOING TO BE IN MY TEAM.
TOO BAD, EDIE. THE MEDIA HAVE ALREADY BEEN HANDED PRESS PACKETS.
WE FIGURED IT WOULD SAVE A LOT OF TIME AND ENERGY IN GETTING TO KNOW THE NEW GUYS.
EXIT

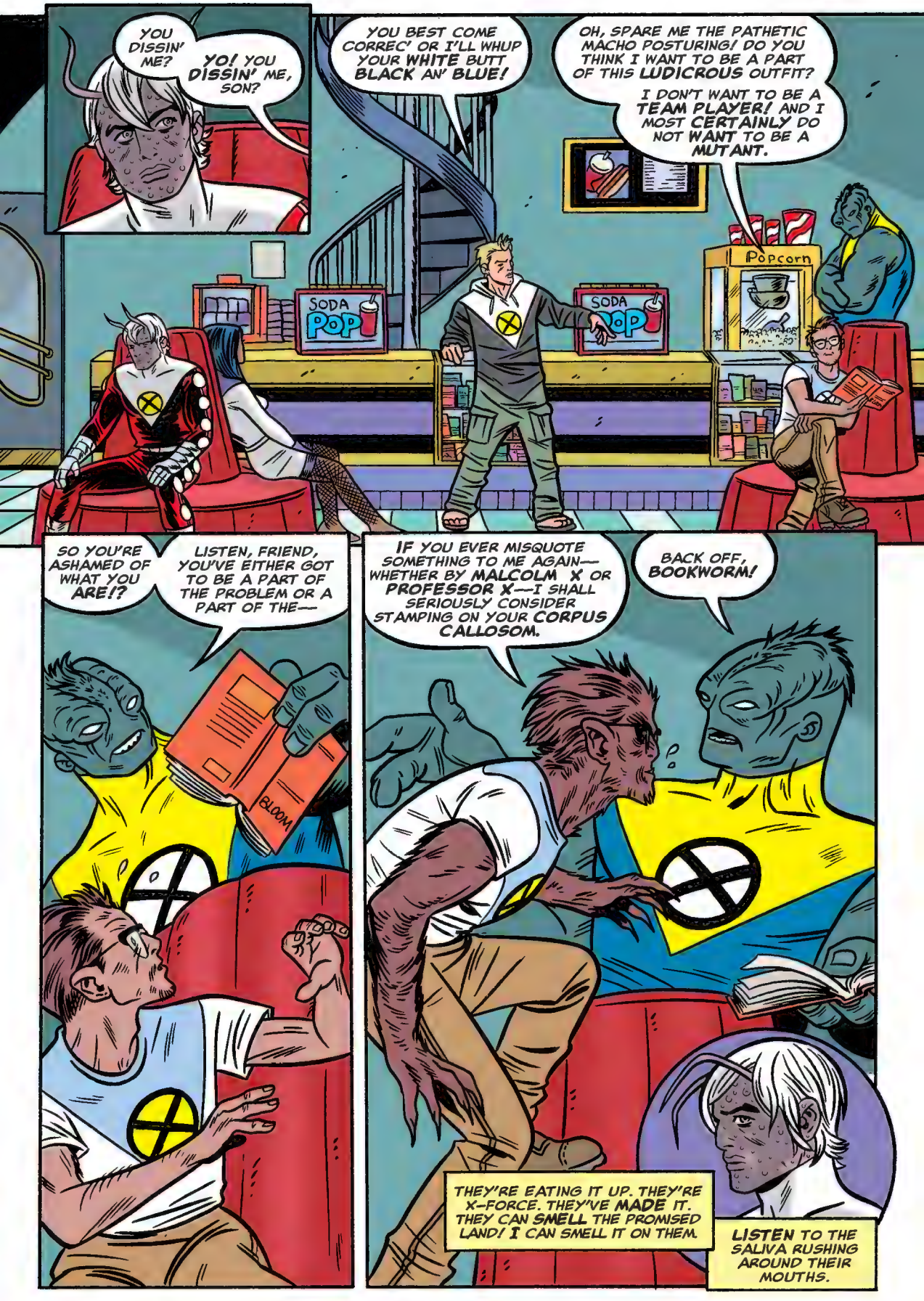
HE'S BIG...
HE'S PINK...
AND HE HAS IMPECCABLE TASTE IN SOFT FURNISHINGS!
MICKEY TORK CUT HIS TEETH WORKING AS A VIGILANTE IN THE STREETS OF SAN FRANCISCO, OPERATING UNDER HIS FORMER NAME "RAINBOW."
DUE TO AN EVOLVING GENETIC CONDITION, THAT NAME SOON CEASED TO BE APPROPRIATE.
THE BIG BOY WITH THE PENCHANT FOR MUSICAL THEATER AND PUMPING IRON SOON FOUND HE POSSESSED THE UNCANNY CHAMELEON ABILITY TO MERGE INTO HIS SURROUNDINGS...
...THEN PINK UP AND WREAK HAVOC!
NEVER BETTER DEPLOYED THAN LAST YEAR, AGAINST A BALKAN TERRORIST GROUP.
WITH A TWO-YEAR KILL RATING OF SIX PER MISSION, THE MUTANT NOW KNOWN AS "BLOKE" IS BETTERED ONLY BY MISTER SENSITIVE AND, OF COURSE, THE ANARCHIST, WHO HAS ALREADY MADE THE BIG STEP UP TO X-FORCE.

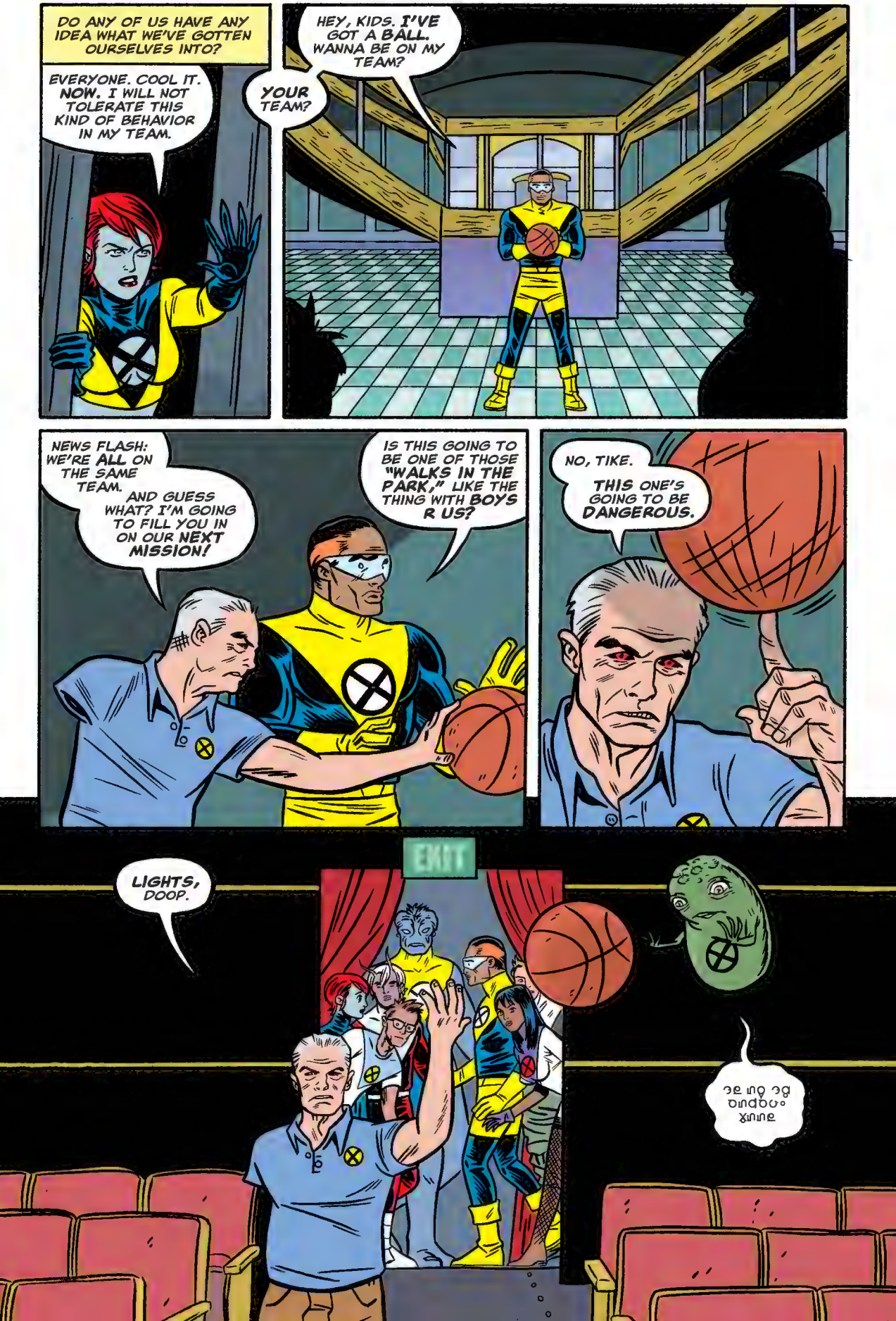
HARVARD.
A YOUNG AND BRILLIANT STUDENT NAMED MYLES ALFRED ATTENDS A LECTURE ON SHAKESPEARE, FREUD AND THE OEDIPUS FALLACY BY HIS ENGLISH TUTOR, HAROLD BLOOM.
HIS FATHER IS AN ESTEEMED ACADEMIC, HIS MOTHER A RENOWNED ETHNOMUSICOLOGIST AND EXPONENT OF THE NORTH AFRICAN 'UD.
THE FUTURE IS MAPPED OUT FOR MYLES: STUDY, BOOKS, A LIFE OF THE MIND.
BUT DESTINY, AND GENETICS, HAVE OTHER IDEAS.
AT FIRST, IT WAS TRIGGERED BY FEAR OR ANGER.
BUT SOON MYLES BECAME ABLE TO CONTROL HIS TRANSFORMATIONS AT WILL.
AUTHOR OF A CRITICALLY-ACCLAIMED PAMPHLET ON WALT WHITMAN AND ABLE TO TEAR THROUGH STEEL WALLS WITH HIS TEETH AND CLAWS, MYLES ALFRED IS. . .
"VIVISECTOR"!


IT WAS THE KIND OF BACKGROUND EVERY ACTOR, ROCK STAR OR MUTANT DREAMS OF.
ALCOHOLIC MOTHER, ABUSIVE FATHER, ALL WRAPPED UP IN A HEADY BREW OF ILLITERACY AND RACIAL INTOLERANCE.
TO ESCAPE THE TRAILER PARKS OF HIS YOUTH, YOUNG BILLY BOB REILLY TOOK TO THE STREETS.
THE STREETS WERE HIS HOME.
THE STREETS ARE HIS HOME.
TO SURVIVE, BILLY BOB DID THINGS HE WASN'T PROUD OF, CHALKING UP HIS ALARMING WEIGHT FLUCTUATIONS TO THE STRESS AND STRAIN OF THE LIFE.
UNTIL TESTS PROVED WHAT BILLY BOB HAD ALWAYS SUSPECTED.
HE WAS NOT LIKE OTHER MEN.
HE CARRIED WITH HIM THE MARK OF THE MUTANT.
AFTER RIGOROUS TRAINING, BILLY BOB DEVELOPED AN AMAZING CONTROL OVER HIS SKIN AND SUBCUTANEOUS GUNK.
AND THOUGH HE HAS PROVED AN INVALUABLE TEAM MEMBER WHEREVER HE'S FOUGHT, WORD IS THERE'S MUCH MORE TO BE SEEN FROM...
"PHAT."
THAT'S THE WORD... FROM THE STREET.


A BARRIO IN BUENOS AIRES, WHERE THE AIR IS ANYTHING BUT BEAUTIFUL. IT'S SEVENTEEN YEARS AGO AND THE STREETS PULSE TO THE SOUND OF THE RUMBA AND WISTFUL SONGS OF THE LOST MALVINAS.
A YOUNG IRISH GIRL AND AN ARGENTINIAN PRIEST WORK SIDE-BY-SIDE IN A MISSION FOR THE POOR.
THE NIGHTS BECOME HOTTER, ITS RHYTHMS MORE SINUOUS.
NINE MONTHS LATER. COUNTY KERRY, IRELAND. A COMMUNITY SCANDALIZED. A FAMILY TORN.
A CHILD BORN.
ANNA, WITH THE GRASS-GREEN EYES.
ANNA, WHO CAN MOVE THINGS JUST BY LOOKING AT THEM. WHO CAN HEAL THE SICK AND THE SAD.
WHOSE REPUTATION GROWS.
"SAINT ANNA," THEY START TO CALL HER.
HOLLYWOOD
THEY HAVEN'T STOPPED.


YES, HE ALWAYS HAD THOSE ANTENNAE AND THAT SHOCK OF WHITE HAIR.
BUT APART FROM THAT, GUY SMITH WAS A NORMAL KID.
A NORMAL KID WHOSE FOLKS TRAGICALLY DIED IN A HOUSE FIRE WHEN GUY WAS JUST TWO YEARS OLD.
AND THEN, SOMETIME DURING HIS TEENS, GUY BEGAN TO CHANGE. HE STARTED TO BECOME... SENSITIVE. VERY SENSITIVE.
A WARM BREEZE. THE RUSTLE OF HIDDEN LIFE UNDERFOOT. THE RACING OF A GIRLFRIEND'S HEART.
PAIN. CONFUSION. ANGUISH.
THE DRUGS HE TOOK TO CONTROL THE ACUTENESS OF HIS SENSES WEREN'T AN ANSWER.
GUY TRAVELED FAR AND WIDE, STUDYING MARTIAL ARTS AND MENTAL DISCIPLINES-- TUKANG MOOSUL. JEET KUNE DO. TO MEDITATION. TANTRIC MAGIC, THE OBSCENE KISS, AND ON AND ON...
AND THEN HE CAME TO THE ATTENTION OF ONE PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER, WHO DESIGNED FOR GUY A SPECIAL SUIT.
A SUIT THAT EMPOWERED HIM TO TEMPER AND CONTROL HIS UNDILUTED SENSES.
GUY SMITH HAS CONQUERED OVERWHELMING ODDS TO BECOME...
"MISTER SENSITIVE."


YOU DISSIN' ME?
YO! YOU DISSIN' ME, SON?
YOU BEST COME CORREC' OR I'LL WHUP YOUR WHITE BUTT BLACK AN' BLUE!
OH, SPARE ME THE PATHETIC MACHO POSTURING! DO YOU THINK I WANT TO BE A PART OF THIS LUDICROUS OUTFIT?
I DON'T WANT TO BE A TEAM PLAYER! AND I MOST CERTAINLY DO NOT WANT TO BE A MUTANT.
SODA POP
SODA POP
Popcorn
SO YOU'RE ASHAMED OF WHAT YOU ARE!?
LISTEN, FRIEND, YOU'VE EITHER GOT TO BE A PART OF THE PROBLEM OR A PART OF THE—
BLOOM
IF YOU EVER MISQUOTE SOMETHING TO ME AGAIN— WHETHER BY MALCOLM X OR PROFESSOR X—I SHALL SERIOUSLY CONSIDER STAMPING ON YOUR CORPUS CALLOSOM.
BACK OFF, BOOKWORM!
THEY'RE EATING IT UP. THEY'RE X-FORCE. THEY'VE MADE IT. THEY CAN SMELL THE PROMISED LAND! I CAN SMELL IT ON THEM.
LISTEN TO THE SALIVA RUSHING AROUND THEIR MOUTHS.

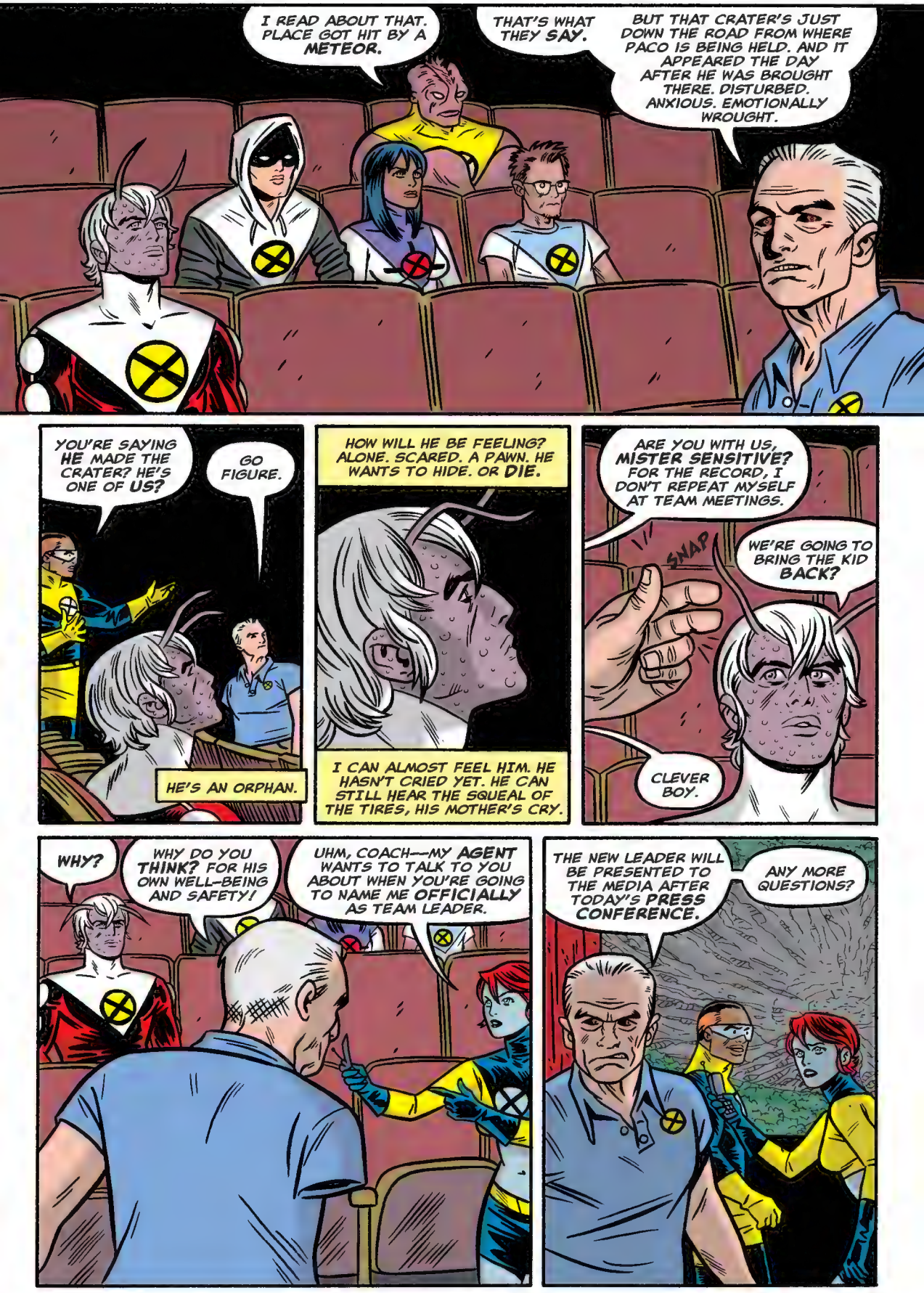

DO ANY OF US HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT WE'VE GOTTEN OURSELVES INTO?
EVERYONE. COOL IT. NOW. I WILL NOT TOLERATE THIS KIND OF BEHAVIOR IN MY TEAM.
YOUR TEAM?
HEY, KIDS. I'VE GOT A BALL. WANNA BE ON MY TEAM?
NEWS FLASH: WE'RE ALL ON THE SAME TEAM.
AND GUESS WHAT? I'M GOING TO FILL YOU IN ON OUR NEXT MISSION!
IS THIS GOING TO BE ONE OF THOSE "WALKS IN THE PARK," LIKE THE THING WITH BOYS R US?
NO, TIKE.
THIS ONE'S GOING TO BE DANGEROUS.
EXIT
LIGHTS, DOOP.
xuuu ooqpuq pe ou ae

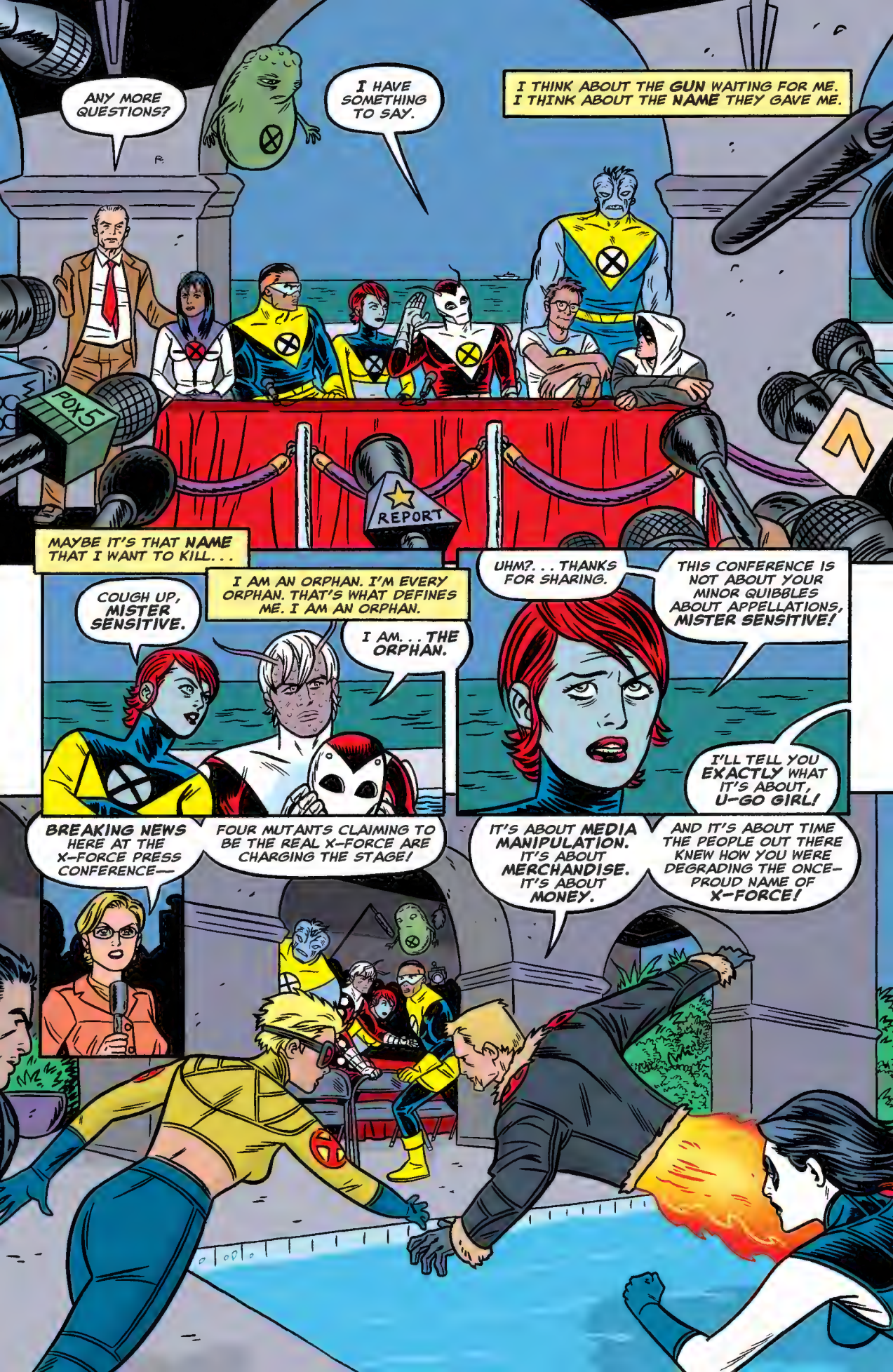
HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHY THEY WERE SO **DESPERATE** TO GET LITTLE PACO BACK?

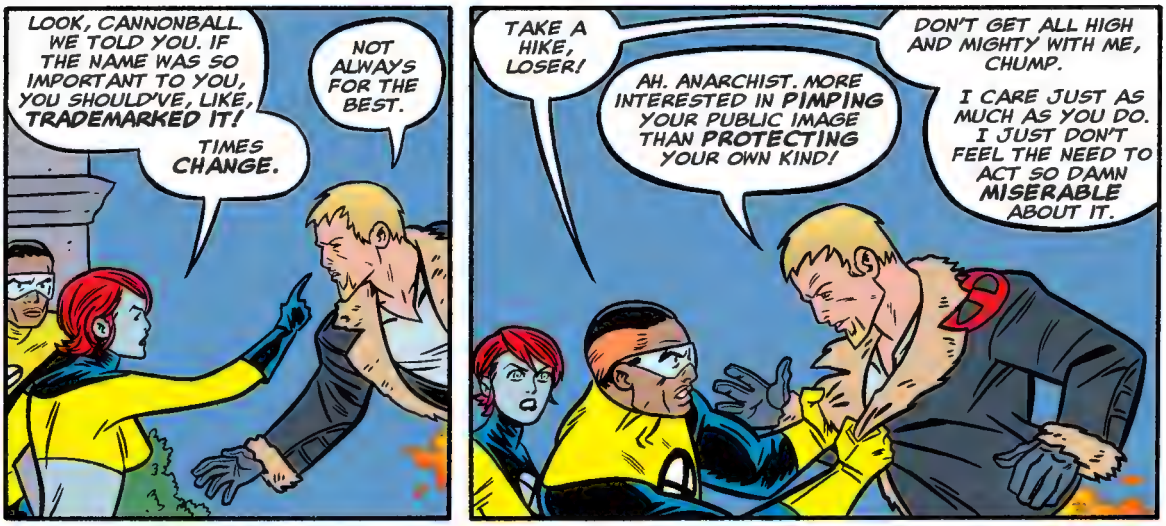
POLITICS?

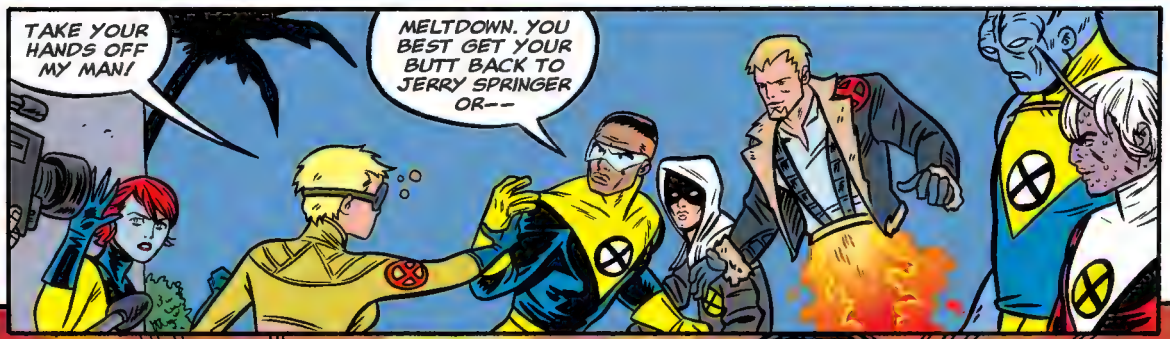
TO STICK IT TO THE >AHEM< "IMPERIALIST RUNNING DOGS OF THE UNITED STATES"?

THIS IS A CRATER IN SOUTHERN BASTRONA. IT'S HALF A MILE WIDE AND ALMOST AS DEEP.


I READ ABOUT THAT. PLACE GOT HIT BY A METEOR.
THAT'S WHAT THEY SAY.
BUT THAT CRATER'S JUST DOWN THE ROAD FROM WHERE PACO IS BEING HELD. AND IT APPEARED THE DAY AFTER HE WAS BROUGHT THERE. DISTURBED. ANXIOUS. EMOTIONALLY WROUGHT.
YOU'RE SAYING HE MADE THE CRATER? HE'S ONE OF US?
GO FIGURE.
HE'S AN ORPHAN.
HOW WILL HE BE FEELING? ALONE. SCARED. A PAWN. HE WANTS TO HIDE. OR DIE.
I CAN ALMOST FEEL HIM. HE HASN'T CRIED YET. HE CAN STILL HEAR THE SQUEAL OF THE TIRES, HIS MOTHER'S CRY.
ARE YOU WITH US, MISTER SENSITIVE? FOR THE RECORD, I DON'T REPEAT MYSELF AT TEAM MEETINGS.
SNAP
WE'RE GOING TO BRING THE KID BACK?
CLEVER BOY.
WHY?
WHY DO YOU THINK? FOR HIS OWN WELL-BEING AND SAFETY!
UHM, COACH—MY AGENT WANTS TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT WHEN YOU'RE GOING TO NAME ME OFFICIALLY AS TEAM LEADER.
THE NEW LEADER WILL BE PRESENTED TO THE MEDIA AFTER TODAY'S PRESS CONFERENCE.
ANY MORE QUESTIONS?


ANY MORE QUESTIONS?
I HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY.
I THINK ABOUT THE GUN WAITING FOR ME. I THINK ABOUT THE NAME THEY GAVE ME.
FOX 5
REPORT
MAYBE IT'S THAT NAME THAT I WANT TO KILL...
COUGH UP, MISTER SENSITIVE.
I AM AN ORPHAN. I'M EVERY ORPHAN. THAT'S WHAT DEFINES ME. I AM AN ORPHAN.
I AM...THE ORPHAN.
UHM?...THANKS FOR SHARING.
THIS CONFERENCE IS NOT ABOUT YOUR MINOR QUIBBLES ABOUT APPELLATIONS, MISTER SENSITIVE!
I'LL TELL YOU EXACTLY WHAT IT'S ABOUT, U-GO GIRL!
BREAKING NEWS HERE AT THE X-FORCE PRESS CONFERENCE—
FOUR MUTANTS CLAIMING TO BE THE REAL X-FORCE ARE CHARGING THE STAGE!
IT'S ABOUT MEDIA MANIPULATION. IT'S ABOUT MERCHANDISE. IT'S ABOUT MONEY.
AND IT'S ABOUT TIME THE PEOPLE OUT THERE KNEW HOW YOU WERE DEGRADING THE ONCE-PROUD NAME OF X-FORCE!



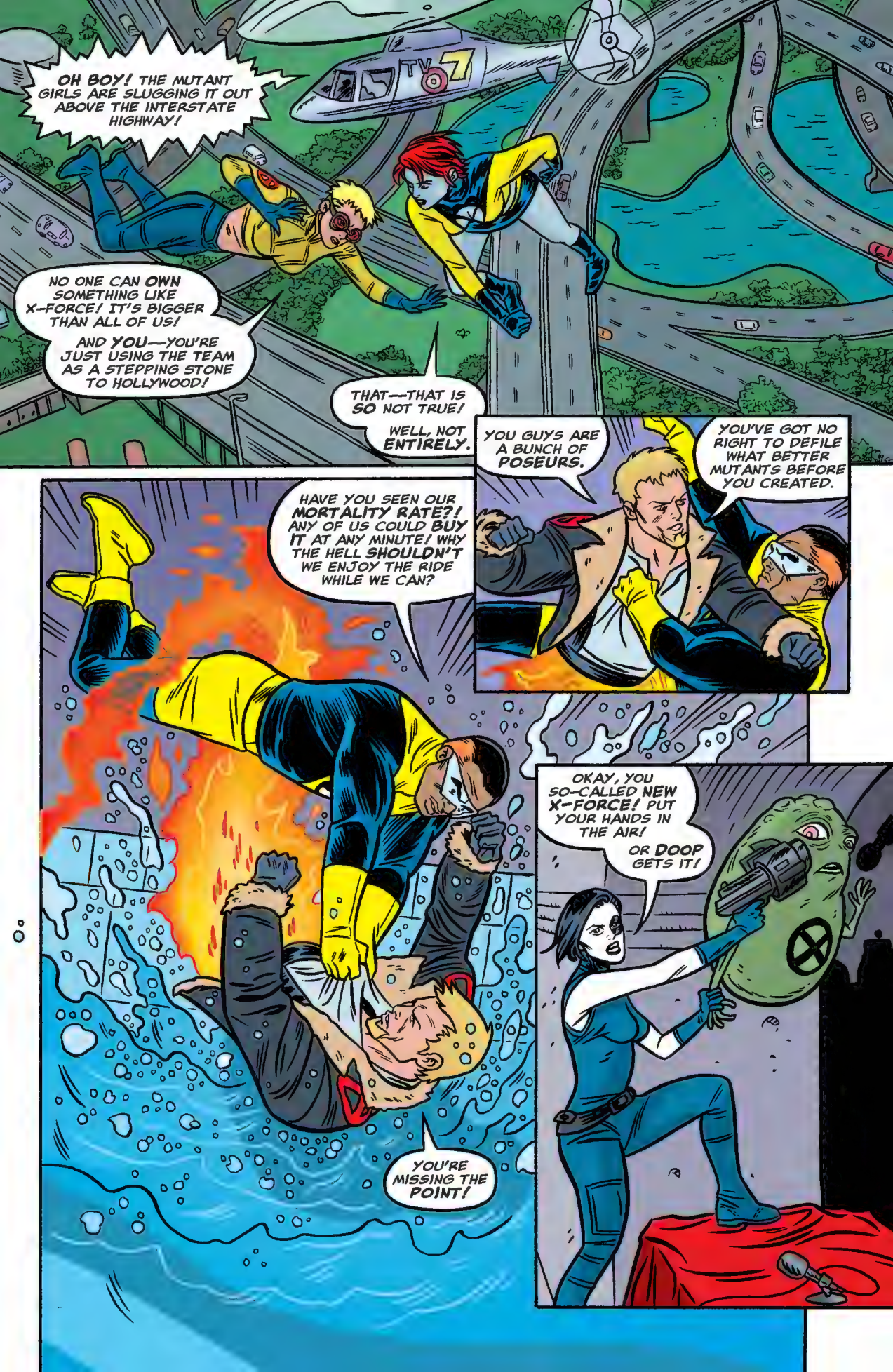


CAN IT, BIG MOUTH!

SKRAK

GOT A BETTER IDEA:

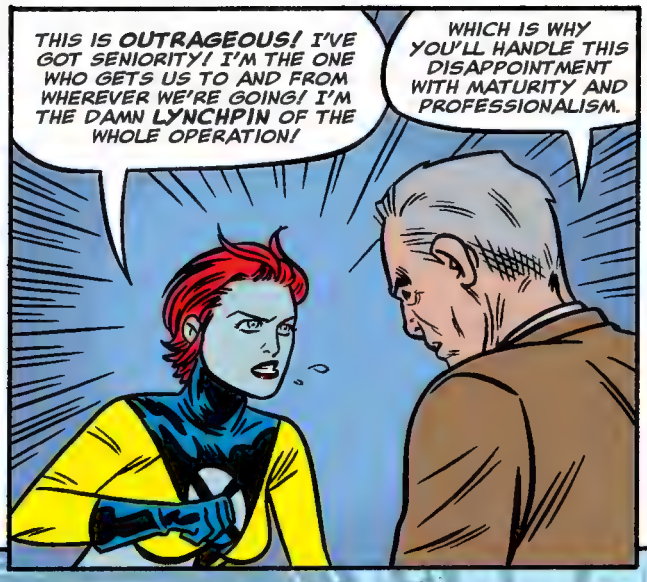
HOW ABOUT US GIRLS TALK?


OH BOY! THE MUTANT GIRLS ARE SLUGGING IT OUT ABOVE THE INTERSTATE HIGHWAY!
NO ONE CAN OWN SOMETHING LIKE X-FORCE! IT'S BIGGER THAN ALL OF US!
AND YOU—YOU'RE JUST USING THE TEAM AS A STEPPING STONE TO HOLLYWOOD!
THAT—THAT IS SO NOT TRUE!
WELL, NOT ENTIRELY.
YOU GUYS ARE A BUNCH OF POSEURS.
YOU'VE GOT NO RIGHT TO DEFILE WHAT BETTER MUTANTS BEFORE YOU CREATED.
HAVE YOU SEEN OUR MORTALITY RATE?! ANY OF US COULD BUY IT AT ANY MINUTE! WHY THE HELL SHOULDN'T WE ENJOY THE RIDE WHILE WE CAN?
YOU'RE MISSING THE POINT!
OKAY, YOU SO-CALLED NEW X-FORCE! PUT YOUR HANDS IN THE AIR!
OR DOOP GETS IT!

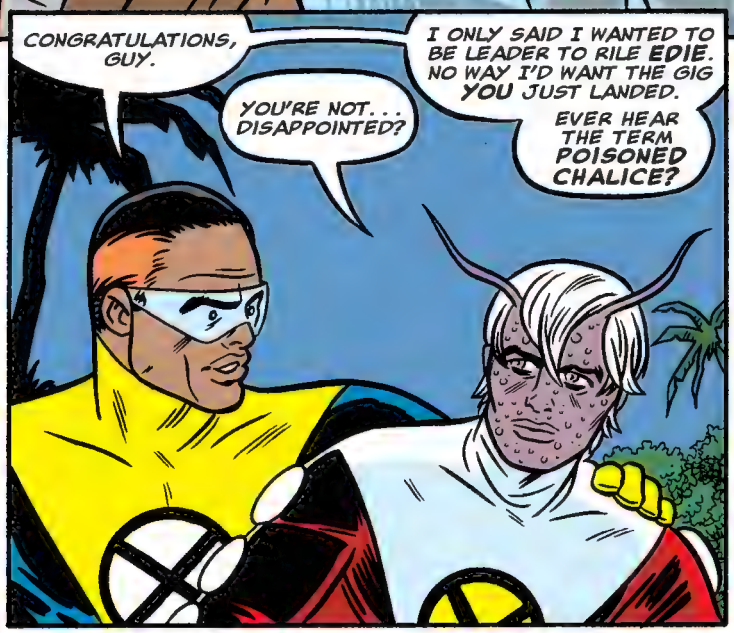
SHE'S BLUFFING. I CAN SENSE IT.
IT'S IN HER SWEAT. HER HEARTBEAT. A MODULATION OF THE LAST TWO WORDS.
THAT GIVES ME THE SPLIT-SECOND I NEED.
PICK ON SOMEONE YOUR OWN SIZE!
HEY, COACH—AREN'T YOU WORRIED THAT THEY'RE GOING TO KILL EACH OTHER?
>SIGH< DESPITE APPEARANCES, THEY'RE ALL PROFESSIONALS. SERIOUS INJURY IS A POSSIBILITY BUT I DOUBT THAT IT'LL COME DOWN TO BODY BAGS.
RESPECT! FOR A BOOKWORM, YOU KICK BUTT!
IF I WANT AFFIRMATION FROM YOU, I'LL ASK FOR IT!
DO YOU WANT ME TO MOVE INSIDE YOU. . . TO HELP YOU WITH THE PAIN?
SAINT ANNA, YOU CAN MOVE ME ANY WAY YOU LIKE.

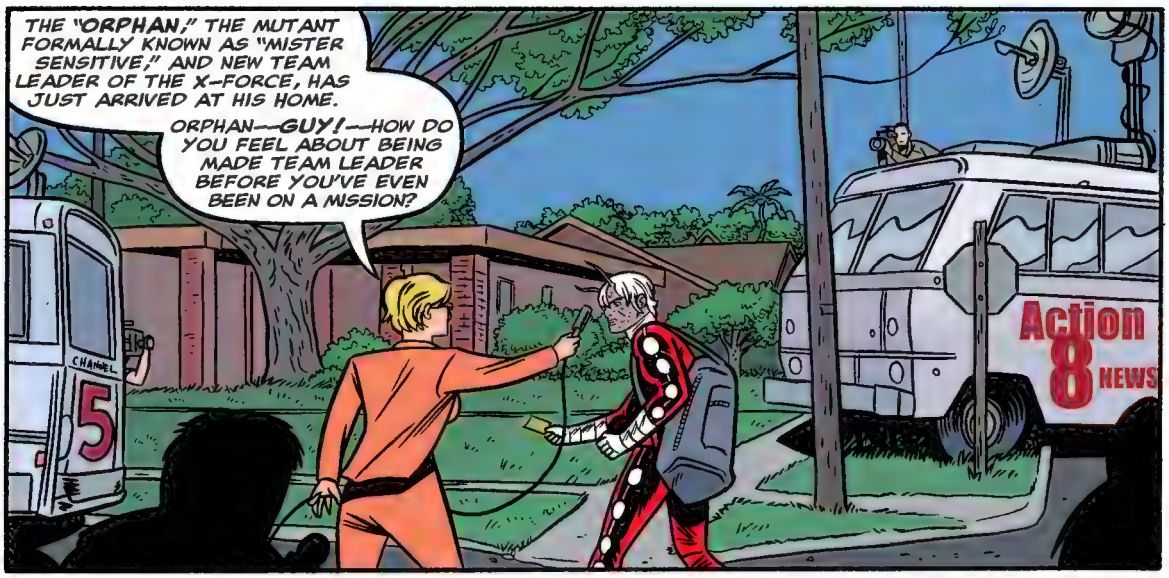
RELATIVE CALM HAS RETURNED TO THE X-FORCE PRESS CONFERENCE—AND BY THE WAY, EDITED HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MUTANT SLUGFEST CAN BE SEEN LATER TONIGHT ON PAY-PER-VIEW.
NOW IT'S TIME FOR THE COACH'S BIG ANNOUNCEMENT.
AS TO THE MATTER OF OUR NEW TEAM LEADER...
IT'S AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK TO REPLACE MY OLD COLLEAGUE AND, I'M PROUD TO SAY, FRIEND, AXEL CLUNEY—A.K.A. "ZEITGEIST"...
BUT AFTER CAREFUL CONSIDERATION, I'VE DECIDED ON THE PERSON MOST WORTHY TO FOLLOW IN HIS FOOTSTEPS.
POX 5
REPORT
THE NEW TEAM LEADER OF X-FORCE IS...
...THE ORPHAN.

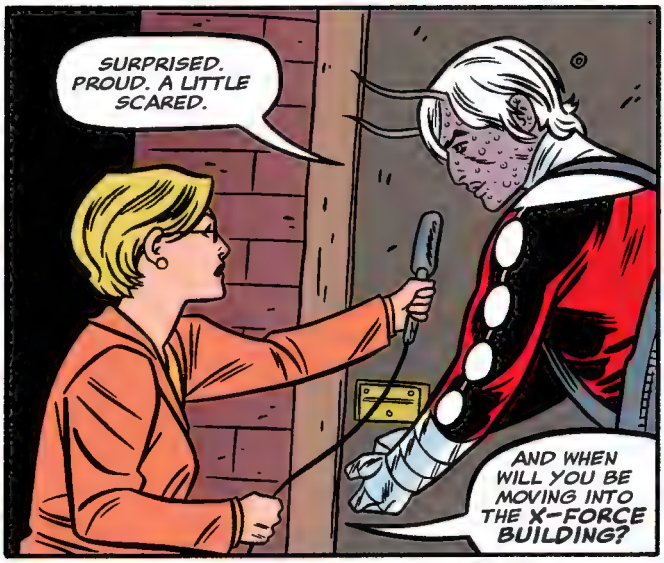
COACH—I DON'T WANT THIS. I'M NOT READY. MAKE U-GO GIRL LEADER. SHE DESERVES IT. SHE WANTS IT.
IT'S NOT YOUR DECISION, GUY. YOU'RE LEADER. THAT'S FINAL.


THIS IS OUTRAGEOUS! I'VE GOT SENIORITY! I'M THE ONE WHO GETS US TO AND FROM WHEREVER WE'RE GOING! I'M THE DAMN LYNCHPIN OF THE WHOLE OPERATION!
WHICH IS WHY YOU'LL HANDLE THIS DISAPPOINTMENT WITH MATURITY AND PROFESSIONALISM.

DROP DEAD!

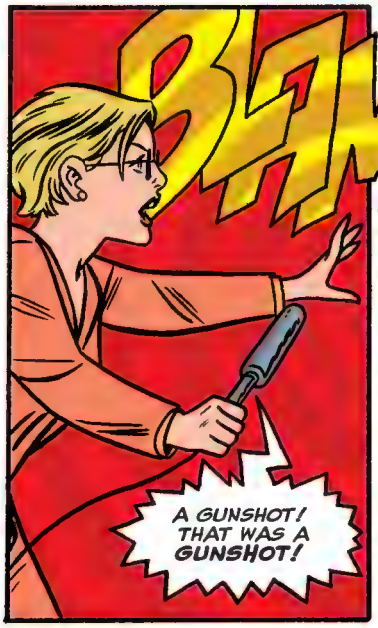

CONGRATULATIONS, GUY.
YOU'RE NOT... DISAPPOINTED?
I ONLY SAID I WANTED TO BE LEADER TO RILE EDIE. NO WAY I'D WANT THE GIG YOU JUST LANDED.
EVER HEAR THE TERM POISONED CHALICE?


THE "ORPHAN," THE MUTANT FORMALLY KNOWN AS "MISTER SENSITIVE," AND NEW TEAM LEADER OF THE X-FORCE, HAS JUST ARRIVED AT HIS HOME.
ORPHAN--GUY!--HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT BEING MADE TEAM LEADER BEFORE YOU'VE EVEN BEEN ON A MISSION?
Action 8 NEWS
CHANNEL 5


SURPRISED. PROUD. A LITTLE SCARED.
AND WHEN WILL YOU BE MOVING INTO THE X-FORCE BUILDING?

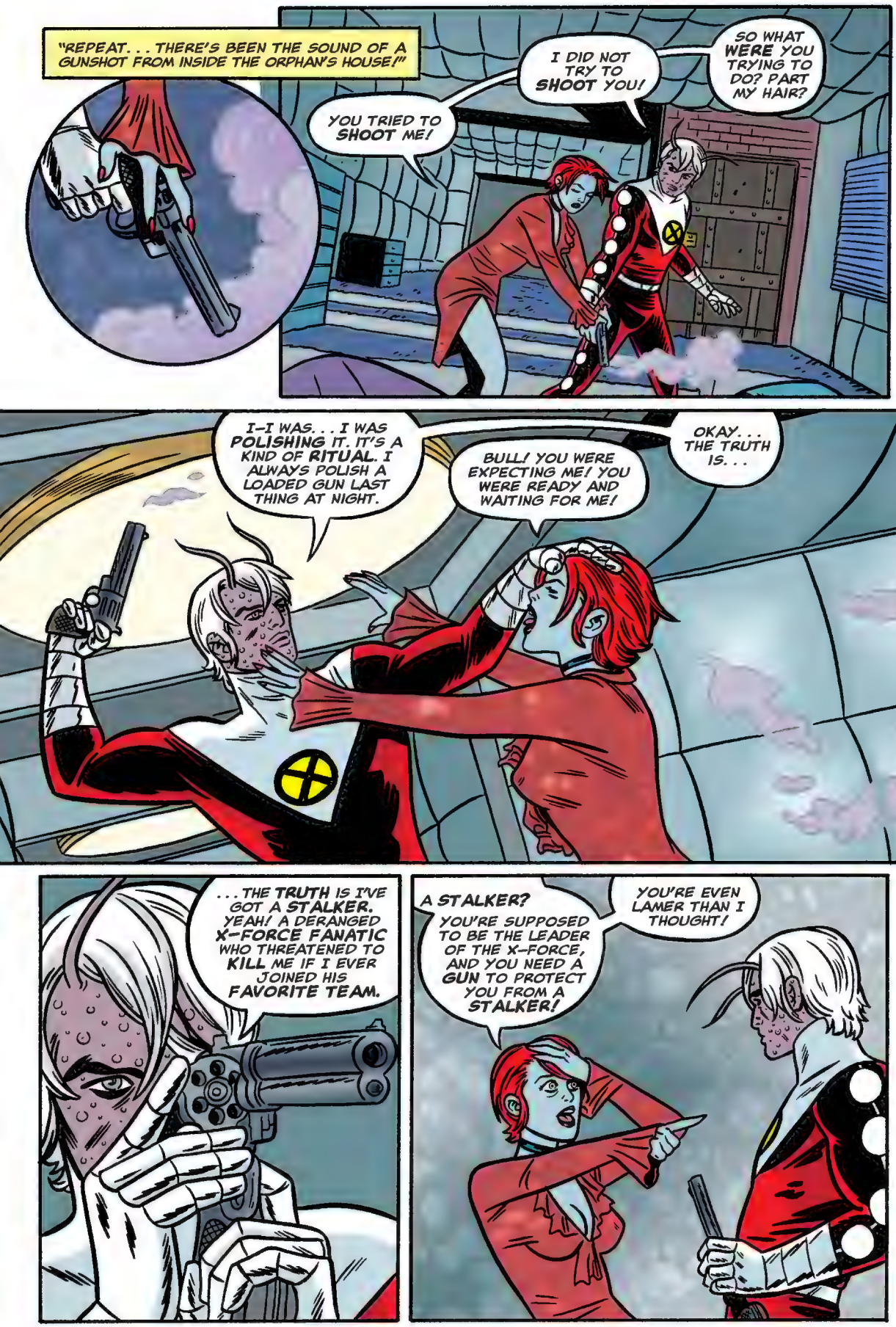
SOON.

STRUGGLING IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE BOYZ R US MASSACRE, WITH MOST OF ITS OLD MEMBERS GONE, A POTENTIAL LEGAL WRANGLE OVER USE OF THE VERY NAME "X-FORCE"...
AND REPORTS THAT EDIE SAWYER--A.K.A. "U-GO-GIRL"--MIGHT BE FORMING YET ANOTHER SPLINTER-GROUP, RUMORS ARE RIFE THAT X-FORCE IS FALLING--

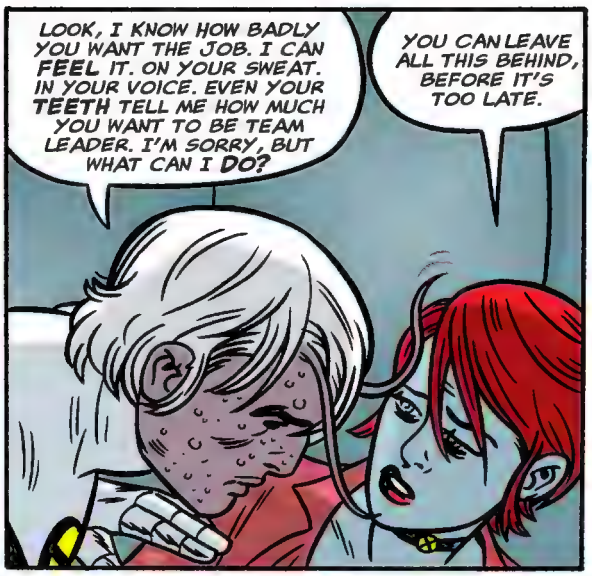

BAM
A GUNSHOT! THAT WAS A GUNSHOT!

I REPEAT: THERE'S BEEN THE SOUND OF A GUNSHOT FROM INSIDE THE ORPHAN'S HOME!

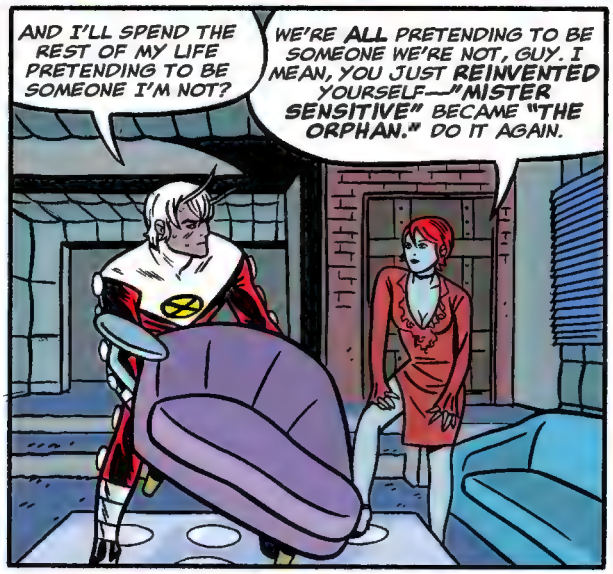
X-FORCE #118

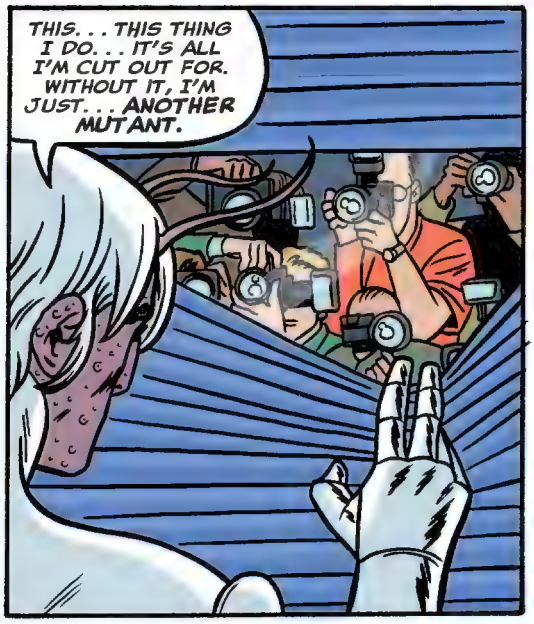

"REPEAT. . . THERE'S BEEN THE SOUND OF A GUNSHOT FROM INSIDE THE ORPHAN'S HOUSE!"
YOU TRIED TO SHOOT ME!
I DID NOT TRY TO SHOOT YOU!
SO WHAT WERE YOU TRYING TO DO? PART MY HAIR?
I–I WAS. . . I WAS POLISHING IT. IT'S A KIND OF RITUAL. I ALWAYS POLISH A LOADED GUN LAST THING AT NIGHT.
BULL! YOU WERE EXPECTING ME! YOU WERE READY AND WAITING FOR ME!
OKAY. . . THE TRUTH IS. . .
. . . THE TRUTH IS I'VE GOT A STALKER. YEAH! A DERANGED X-FORCE FANATIC WHO THREATENED TO KILL ME IF I EVER JOINED HIS FAVORITE TEAM.
A STALKER?
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE THE LEADER OF THE X-FORCE, AND YOU NEED A GUN TO PROTECT YOU FROM A STALKER!
YOU'RE EVEN LAMER THAN I THOUGHT!

WHY DID YOU COME HERE?
I CAME HERE TO HELP YOU.
TO MAKE YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND.


LOOK, I KNOW HOW BADLY YOU WANT THE JOB. I CAN FEEL IT. ON YOUR SWEAT. IN YOUR VOICE. EVEN YOUR TEETH TELL ME HOW MUCH YOU WANT TO BE TEAM LEADER. I'M SORRY, BUT WHAT CAN I DO?
YOU CAN LEAVE ALL THIS BEHIND, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.

I CAN HELP YOU. I CAN 'PORT YOU SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY. I'VE GOT CASH. I CAN SET YOU UP IN A NEW LIFE, WITH NEW I.D.—


AND I'LL SPEND THE REST OF MY LIFE PRETENDING TO BE SOMEONE I'M NOT?
WE'RE ALL PRETENDING TO BE SOMEONE WE'RE NOT, GUY. I MEAN, YOU JUST REINVENTED YOURSELF—"MISTER SENSITIVE" BECAME "THE ORPHAN." DO IT AGAIN.

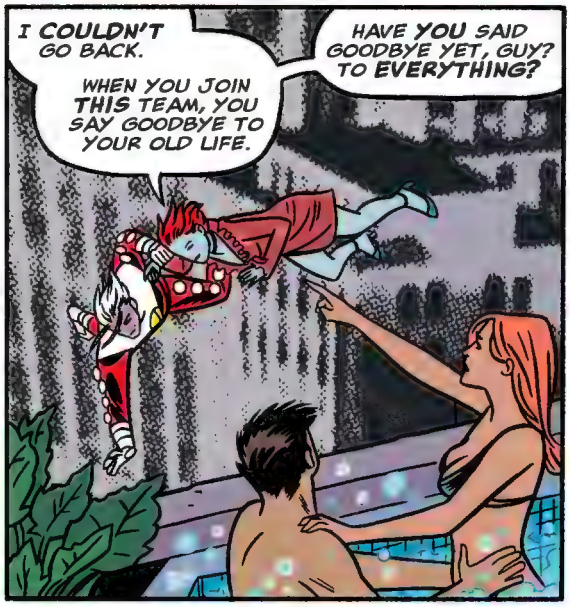

THIS... THIS THING I DO... IT'S ALL I'M CUT OUT FOR. WITHOUT IT, I'M JUST... ANOTHER MUTANT.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
SHUT UP AND THINK, WHILE YOU STILL CAN.

STAN LEE PRESENTS
PETER MILLIGAN-WRITER
M.D. "DOC" ALLRED-ARTIST
AND THEN THERE WERE SIX
LAURA ALLRED-COLORS AND SEPS
JOHN MIESEGAES-ASSISTANT EDITOR
JOE QUESADA-EDITOR IN CHIEF
MIKE ALLRED & BLAMBOT-LETTERS
AXEL ALONSO-EDITOR
BILL JEMAS-PRESIDENT
TAKE A LOOK, GUY SMITH, OR MISTER SENSITIVE, OR THE ORPHAN, OR WHATEVER YOU WANT TO CALL YOURSELF—IT'S A LONG WAY DOWN.
DO YOU HAVE A HEAD FOR HEIGHTS?

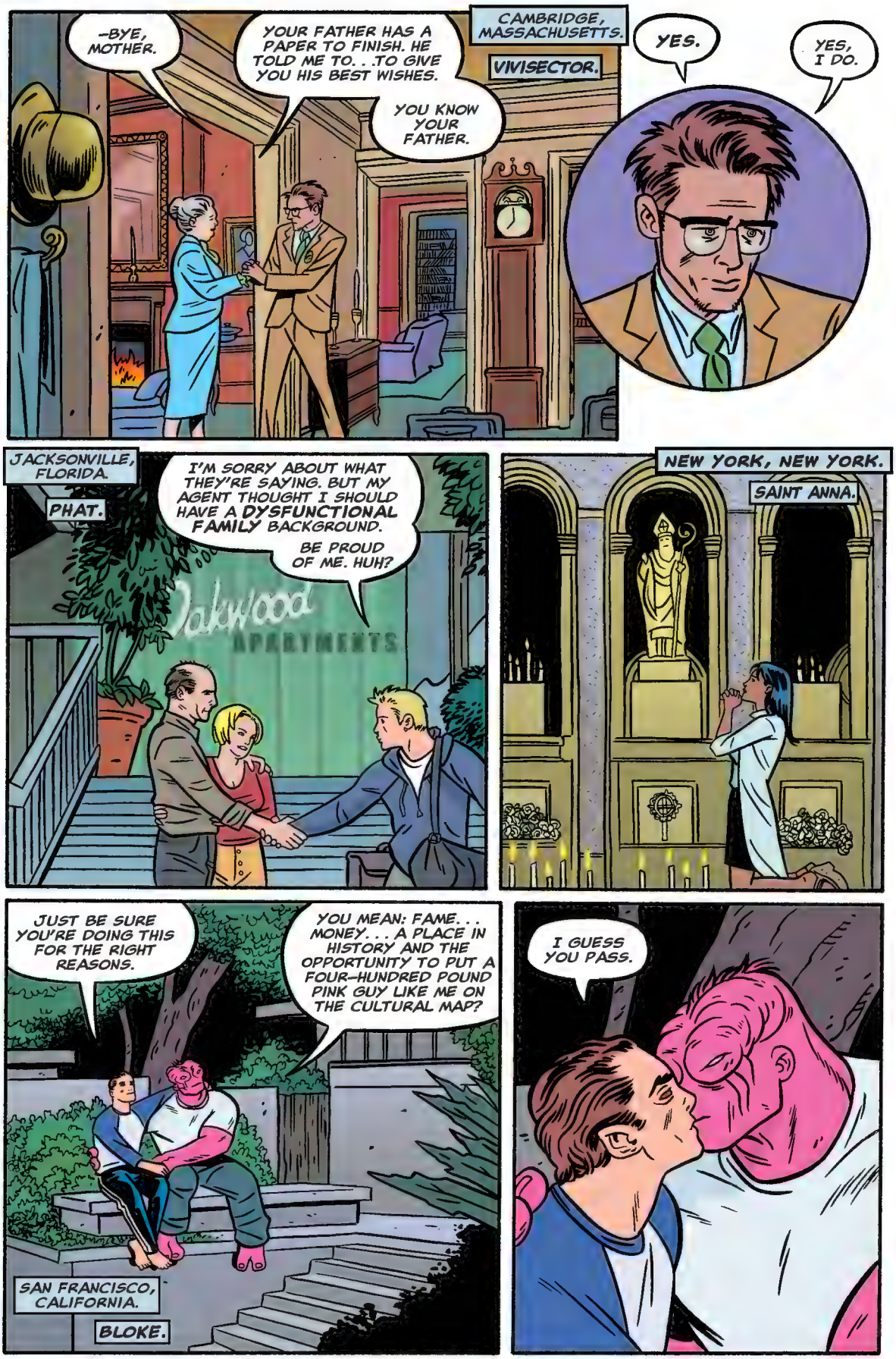
EDIE! I'M NOT ONE OF THOSE HEROES WITH THE POWER OF FLIGHT, YOU KNOW!
HEROES? X-FORCE IS WAY BEYOND HEROES— AND VILLAINS.

WE'RE OUT THERE, ALONE, MAKING IT UP AS WE GO ALONG. WE DON'T KNOW IF WE'RE DOING GOOD OR BAD. WE EXIST ONLY TO EXIST.
IT'S SCARY.
SO WHY DON'T YOU WALK, TAKE YOUR OWN ADVICE?


I COULDN'T GO BACK.
WHEN YOU JOIN THIS TEAM, YOU SAY GOODBYE TO YOUR OLD LIFE.
HAVE YOU SAID GOODBYE YET, GUY? TO EVERYTHING?

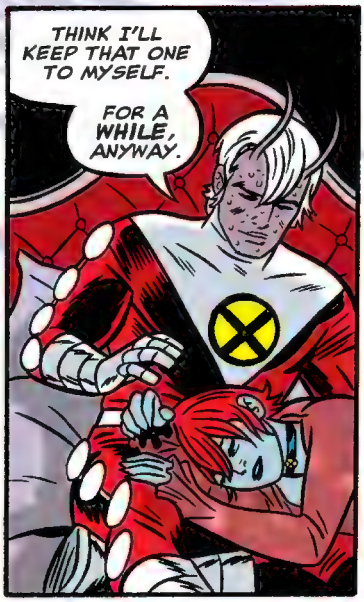
THOSE OTHER POOR SLOBS WHO JOINED WITH YOU, THEY'RE SAYING GOODBYE.
BUT I WONDER IF THEY KNOW HOW FINAL IT IS.
EDIE, YOUR HEARTBEAT'S SLOWING DOWN.

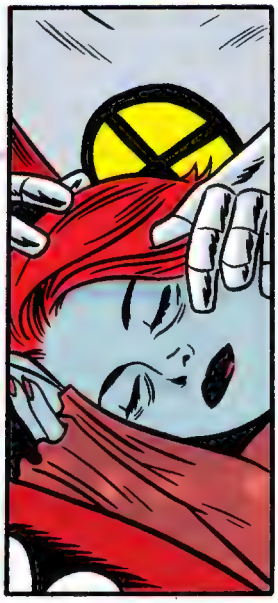
BECAUSE I'M GETTING DROWSY. I COULD FALL ASLEEP ANY MINUTE. THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS IF I 'PORT TOO MUCH.
SAY GOODBYE, GUY SMITH. . .
SAY GOOD–

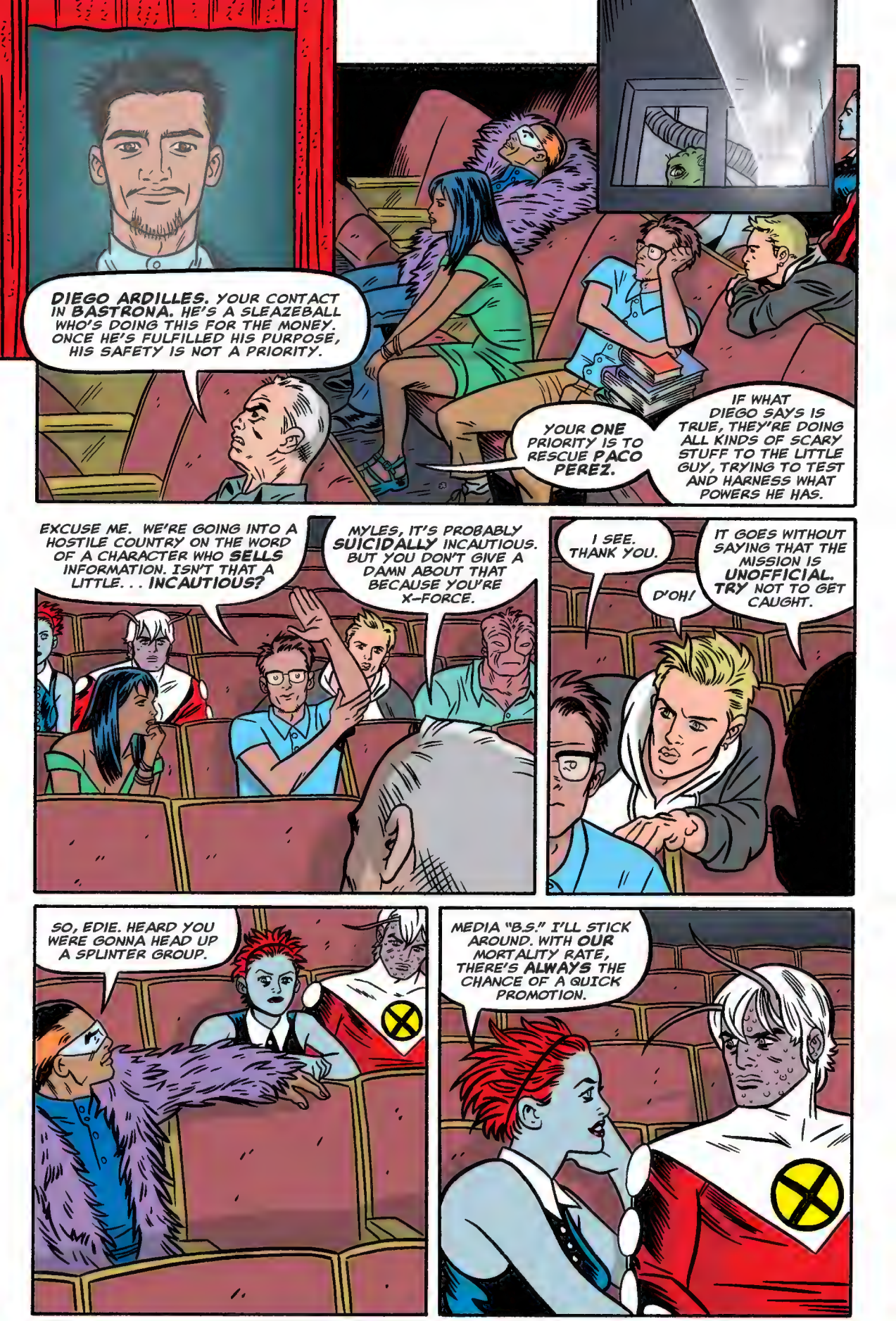

-BYE, MOTHER.
YOUR FATHER HAS A PAPER TO FINISH. HE TOLD ME TO. . .TO GIVE YOU HIS BEST WISHES.
YOU KNOW YOUR FATHER.
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS.
VIVISECTOR.
YES.
YES, I DO.
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA.
PHAT.
I'M SORRY ABOUT WHAT THEY'RE SAYING. BUT MY AGENT THOUGHT I SHOULD HAVE A DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY BACKGROUND.
BE PROUD OF ME. HUH?
Oakwood APARTMENTS
NEW YORK, NEW YORK.
SAINT ANNA.
JUST BE SURE YOU'RE DOING THIS FOR THE RIGHT REASONS.
YOU MEAN: FAME. . . MONEY. . . A PLACE IN HISTORY AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO PUT A FOUR-HUNDRED POUND PINK GUY LIKE ME ON THE CULTURAL MAP?
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA.
BLOKE.
I GUESS YOU PASS.

-BYE...
I SAID GOODBYE... TO SOOOO MUCH. YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE WHAT I...
WHAT I... LEFT...

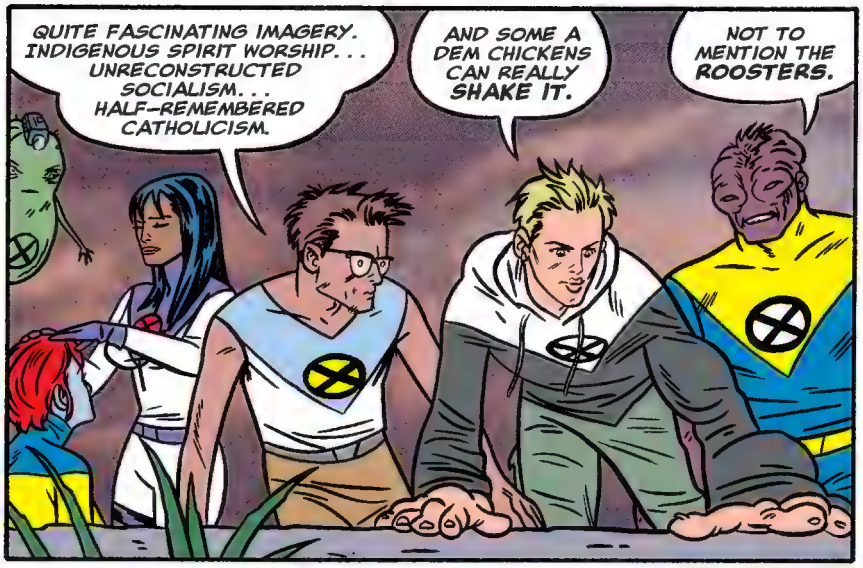
...BEHIND.
YOU COULD HAVE **HAD** IT, EDIE. IF YOU HADN'T COME FLYING AROUND TRYING TO TALK ME INTO QUITTING... I WOULD'VE PUT A BULLET IN MY BRAIN.
YOU SAVED MY LIFE.

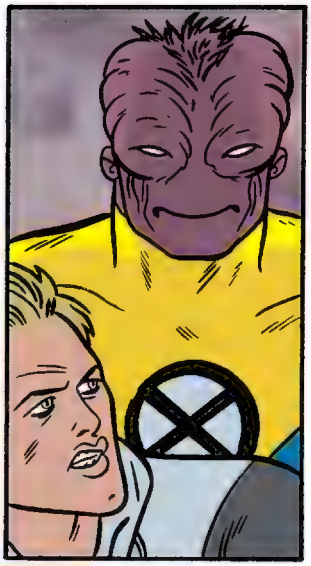

THINK I'LL KEEP THAT ONE TO MYSELF.
FOR A **WHILE**, ANYWAY.

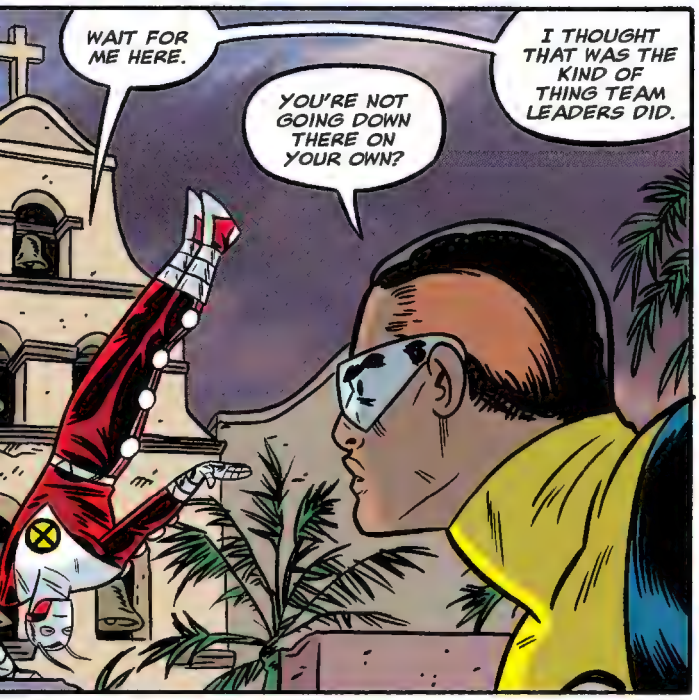



DIEGO ARDILLES. YOUR CONTACT IN BASTRONA. HE'S A SLEAZEBALL WHO'S DOING THIS FOR THE MONEY. ONCE HE'S FULFILLED HIS PURPOSE, HIS SAFETY IS NOT A PRIORITY.
YOUR ONE PRIORITY IS TO RESCUE PACO PEREZ.
IF WHAT DIEGO SAYS IS TRUE, THEY'RE DOING ALL KINDS OF SCARY STUFF TO THE LITTLE GUY, TRYING TO TEST AND HARNESS WHAT POWERS HE HAS.
EXCUSE ME. WE'RE GOING INTO A HOSTILE COUNTRY ON THE WORD OF A CHARACTER WHO SELLS INFORMATION. ISN'T THAT A LITTLE... INCAUTIOUS?
MYLES, IT'S PROBABLY SUICIDALLY INCAUTIOUS. BUT YOU DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT THAT BECAUSE YOU'RE X-FORCE.
I SEE. THANK YOU.
D'OH!
IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT THE MISSION IS UNOFFICIAL. TRY NOT TO GET CAUGHT.
SO, EDIE. HEARD YOU WERE GONNA HEAD UP A SPLINTER GROUP.
MEDIA "B.S." I'LL STICK AROUND. WITH OUR MORTALITY RATE, THERE'S ALWAYS THE CHANCE OF A QUICK PROMOTION.

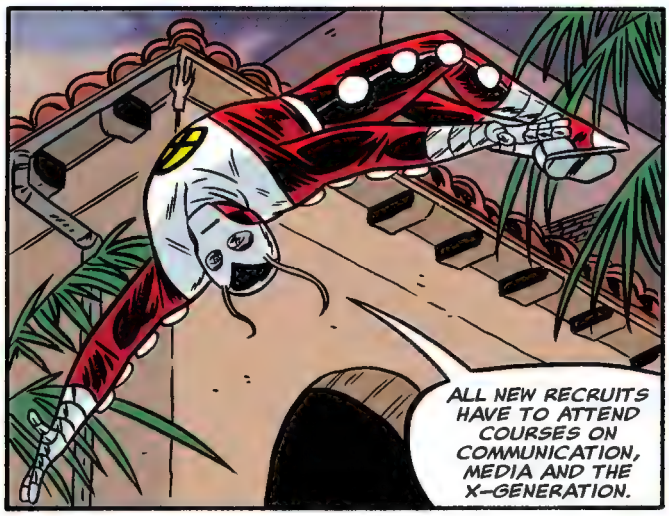
SOMEONE'S MOVING AROUND! I TOLD YOU ALL NOT TO MOVE AROUND!
I. . . I'M HAVING TROUBLE STOPPING MYSELF EXPANDING.
THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BASTRONA.
WELL GO ON A DAMN DIET, OR NEXT TIME YOU CAN CATCH A PLANE.
YOU OKAY? YOU LOOK BEAT.
IT'S THAT TIME OF THE MONTH. MAKES 'PORTING A REAL EFFORT. I COULD TAKE ANOTHER AMPOULE, BUT I DON'T WANT TO GET TOO CRANKY.
I MIGHT BE ABLE TO REVITALIZE YOU. DO YOU MIND IF I PUT MY HANDS ON YOUR SCALP?
HEY, IF YOU DON'T MIND GETTING HAIR GEL UNDER YOUR FINGER-NAILS.


QUITE FASCINATING IMAGERY. INDIGENOUS SPIRIT WORSHIP... UNRECONSTRUCTED SOCIALISM... HALF-REMEMBERED CATHOLICISM.
AND SOME A DEM CHICKENS CAN REALLY SHAKE IT.
NOT TO MENTION THE ROOSTERS.

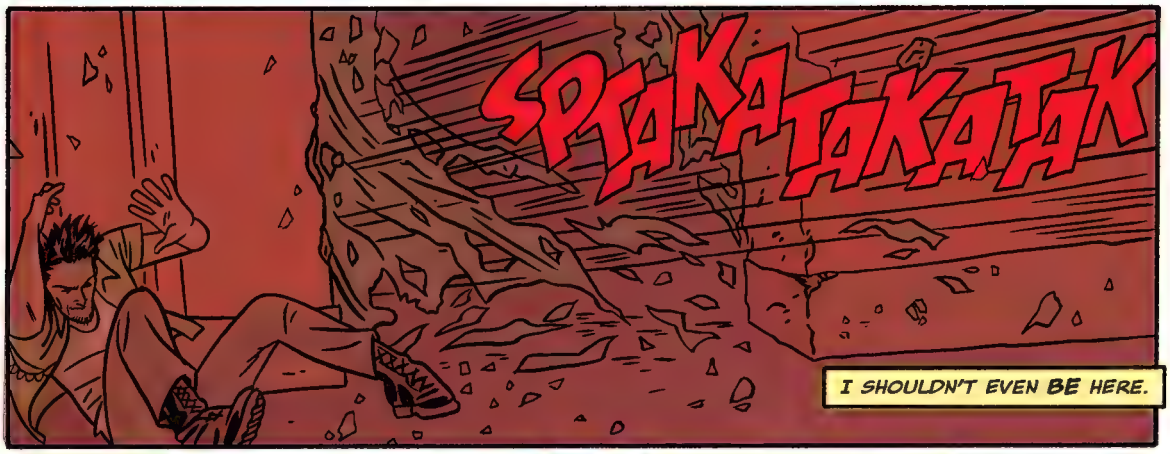


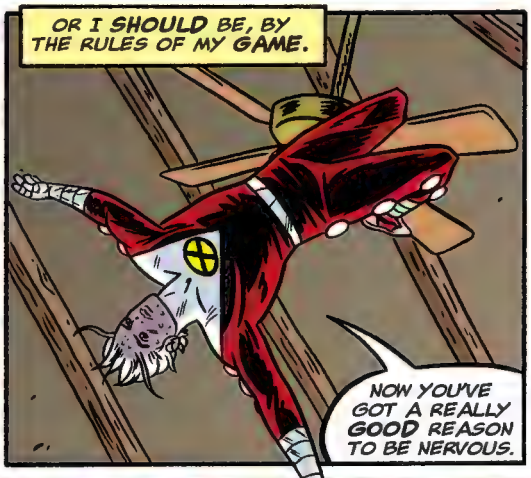

WAIT FOR ME HERE.
YOU'RE NOT GOING DOWN THERE ON YOUR OWN?
I THOUGHT THAT WAS THE KIND OF THING TEAM LEADERS DID.

MAYBE IF I ACT LIKE ONE, I'LL START TO FEEL LIKE ONE.
DOOP, GET SOME SHOTS OF THE PARADE. IT'LL GIVE THE FILM SOMETHING INTERESTING TO CUT AWAY TO.
LISTEN TO YOU, MR. SODERBERGH!


ALL NEW RECRUITS HAVE TO ATTEND COURSES ON COMMUNICATION, MEDIA AND THE X-GENERATION.

OKAY. DIEGO'S HEARTBEAT IS RAPID AND ERRATIC. A SOFT BREEZE ON MY FACE AS HIS HANDS TREMBLE.
NERVOUS?
YOU'LL GET YOUR MONEY AFTER YOU SHOW US WHERE PACO PEREZ IS.
N-NO, I—
I'LL. . . GO GET A MAP.
UH-UH. YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE US TO HIM.
THE AIR SHIFTS OUTSIDE. A DIFFERENT KIND OF HUMAN SWEAT. PEOPLE STOP DANCING.
DIEGO, YOU LITTLE SNAKE.
WAIT! THEY'RE NOT ALL HERE! WAI—





WHAT DOES THAT MAKE ME? A CHEAT?

EXCEPT FOR TIKE ALICAR. FORTY SIX A MINUTE. SAME AS USUAL.

I'M GLAD HE'S ON MY SIDE.

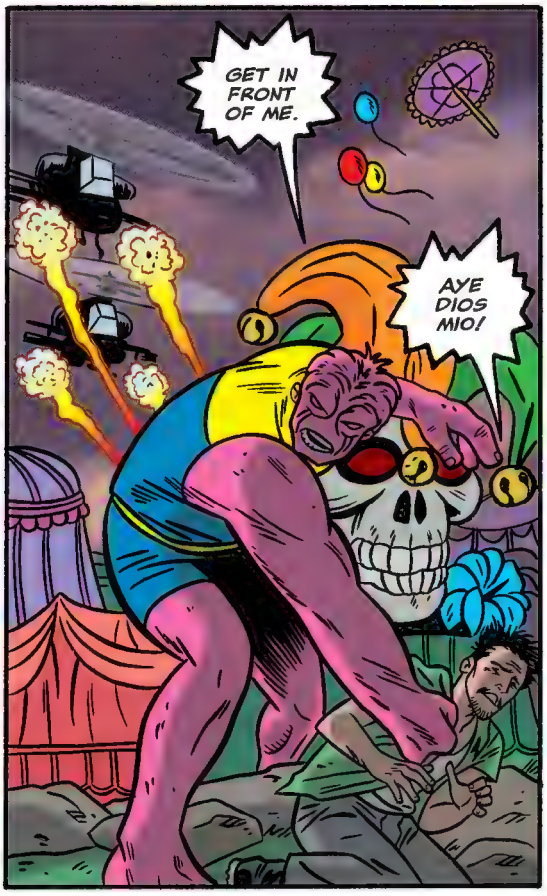
I DID SAY THAT SOMETHING LIKE THIS WAS LIKELY TO HAPPEN.

AND DID ANYONE LISTEN?

SURE WE LISTENED.
WE JUST DIDN'T GIVE A DAMN WHAT YOU SAID.
WOW. WHAT A RUSH!
EDIE MADE THE DECISION TO CHECK OUT HOW YOU WERE DOING.
I TOLD YOU TO WAIT FOR ME.
AS SENIOR MEMBER, I MADE AN EXECUTIVE DECISION.
WELL, DON'T.
SO. THAT'S PROBABLY THE SECOND TIME SHE'S SAVED MY LIFE.
WHERE'S DIEGO?
HE'S MINE!

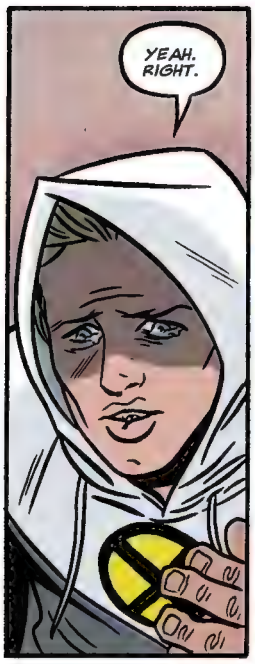
TIKE...
'S' ALRIGHT. I CAN TAKE BOTH OF 'EM OUT.

WHAT THE HELL'RE YOU DOING?!
WE CAN'T BRING THEM DOWN HERE! TOO MANY PEOPLE!

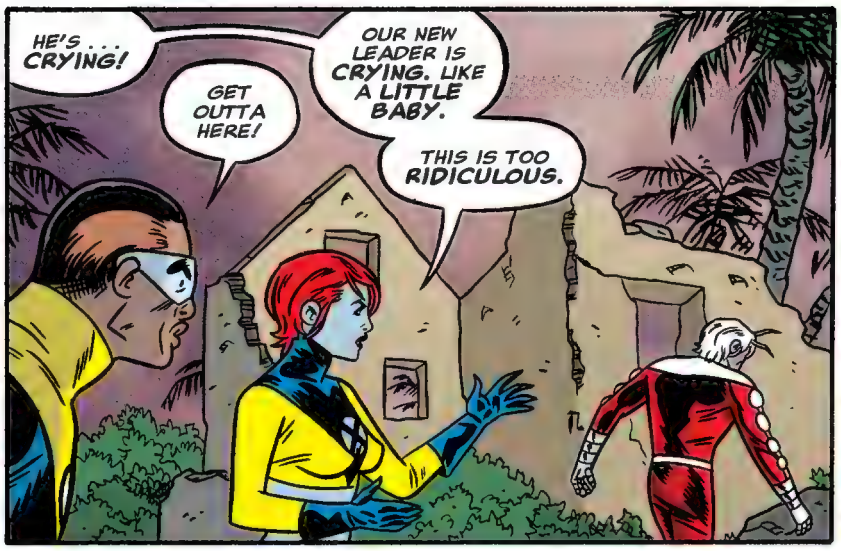

GET IN FRONT OF ME.
AYE DIOS MIO!

I SAID GET IN—
BOOM

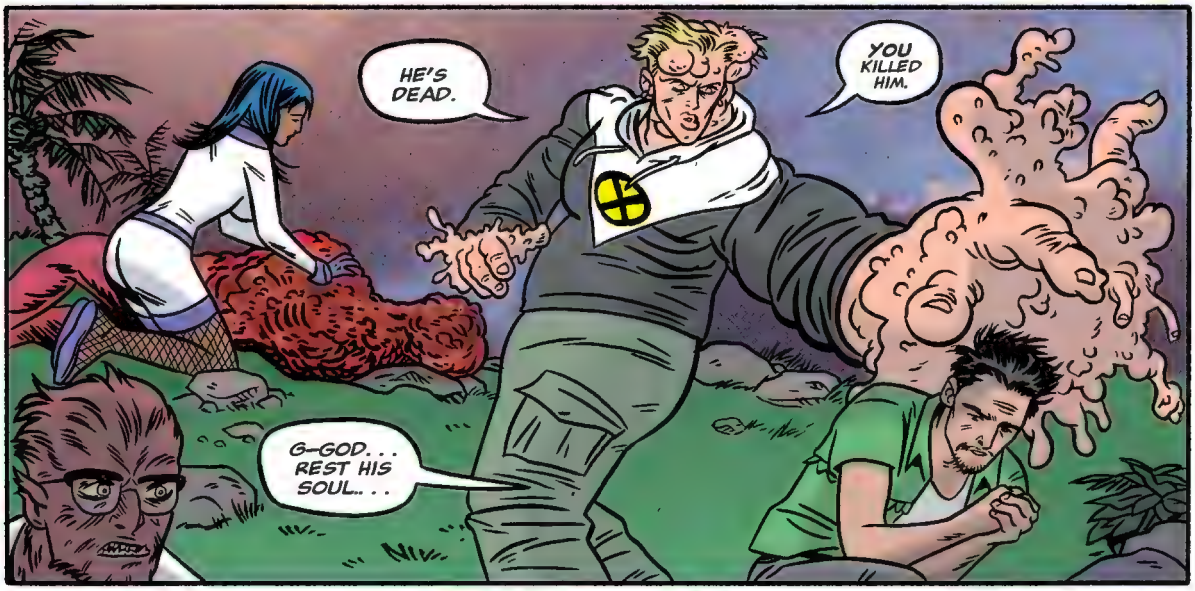
FUNNY. . .IT FEELS LIKE . . . IT SHOULD HURT MORE THAN THIS.
SAINT ANNA'S GONNA TAKE CARE OF YOU TILL WE GET YOU FIXED UP, BROTHER.
I'M WAY BEYOND FIXING, BILLY BOB.
ANYWAY. . . ONE LESS OF MY KIND TO WORRY ABOUT, RIGHT?


YEAH. RIGHT.

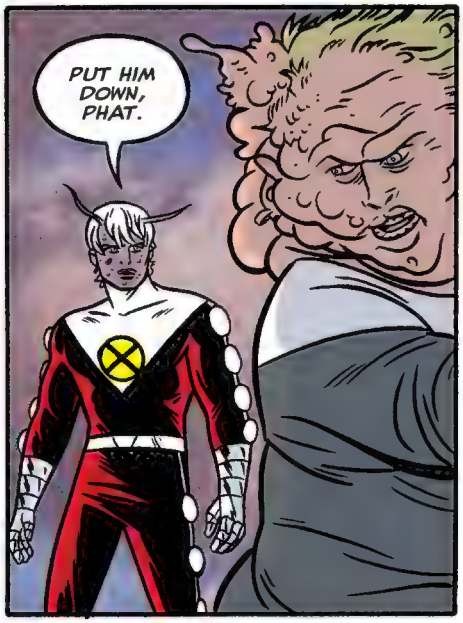
AND THEN THERE WERE SIX.
LEAVE IT, EDIE.
HEY, GUY! ORPHAN BOY! KEEP THIS UP, AND THERE'LL BE NO TEAM LEFT FOR YOU TO LEAD.

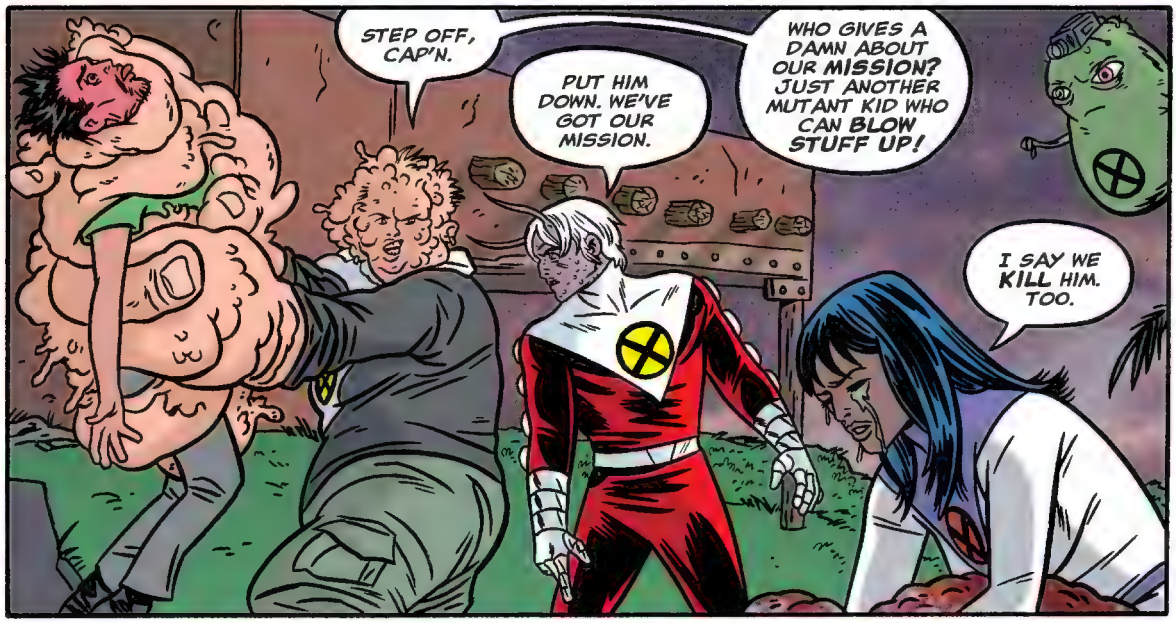

HE'S . . . CRYING!
GET OUTTA HERE!
OUR NEW LEADER IS CRYING, LIKE A LITTLE BABY.
THIS IS TOO RIDICULOUS.

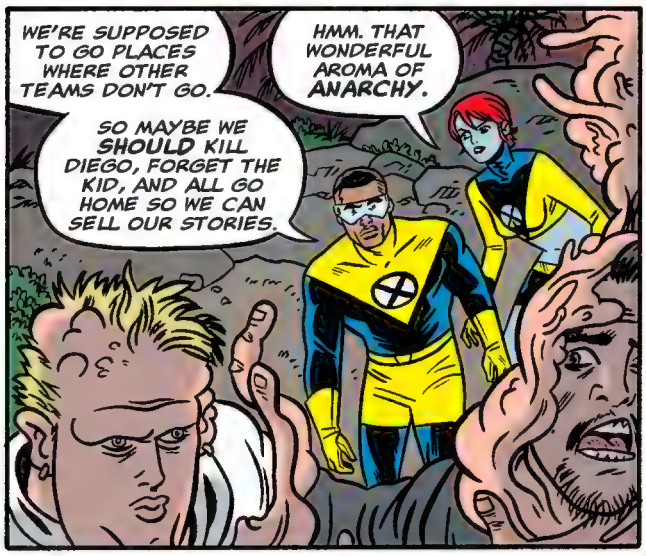
FUNNY. CAN'T REMEMBER THE LAST TIME I CRIED.

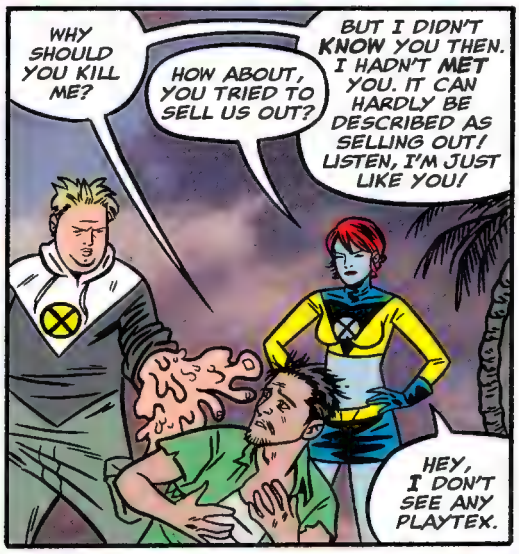

HE'S DEAD.
YOU KILLED HIM.
G-GOD. . . REST HIS SOUL. . .

YOU KILLED HIM.

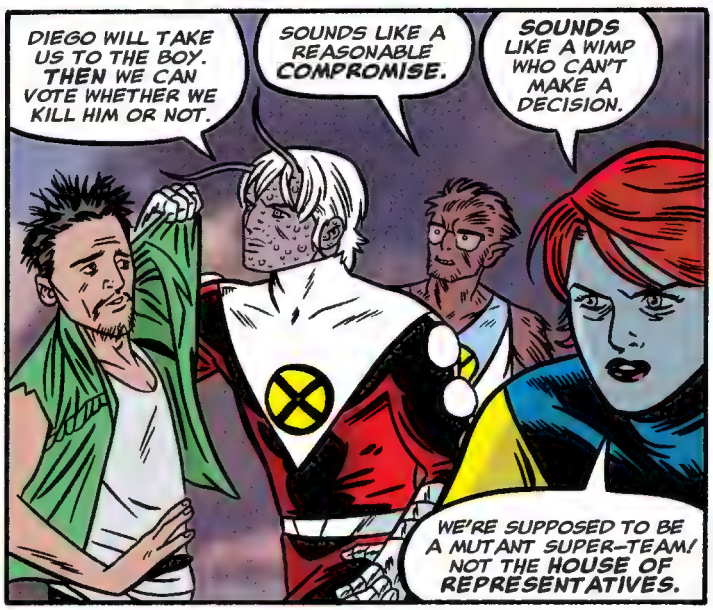

PUT HIM DOWN, PHAT.

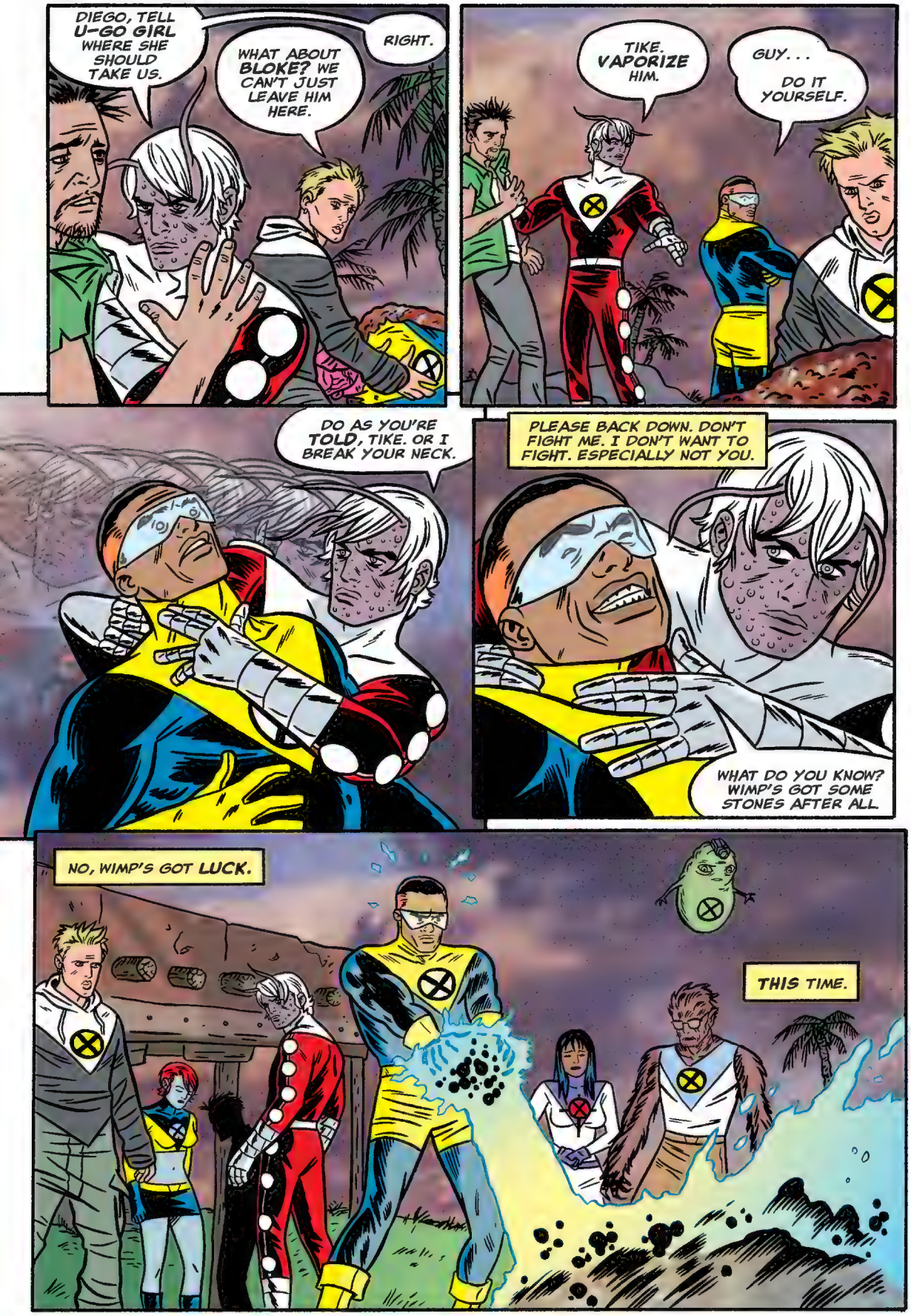

STEP OFF, CAP'N.
PUT HIM DOWN. WE'VE GOT OUR MISSION.
WHO GIVES A DAMN ABOUT OUR MISSION? JUST ANOTHER MUTANT KID WHO CAN BLOW STUFF UP!
I SAY WE KILL HIM. TOO.


WE'RE SUPPOSED TO GO PLACES WHERE OTHER TEAMS DON'T GO.
HMM. THAT WONDERFUL AROMA OF ANARCHY.
SO MAYBE WE SHOULD KILL DIEGO, FORGET THE KID, AND ALL GO HOME SO WE CAN SELL OUR STORIES.

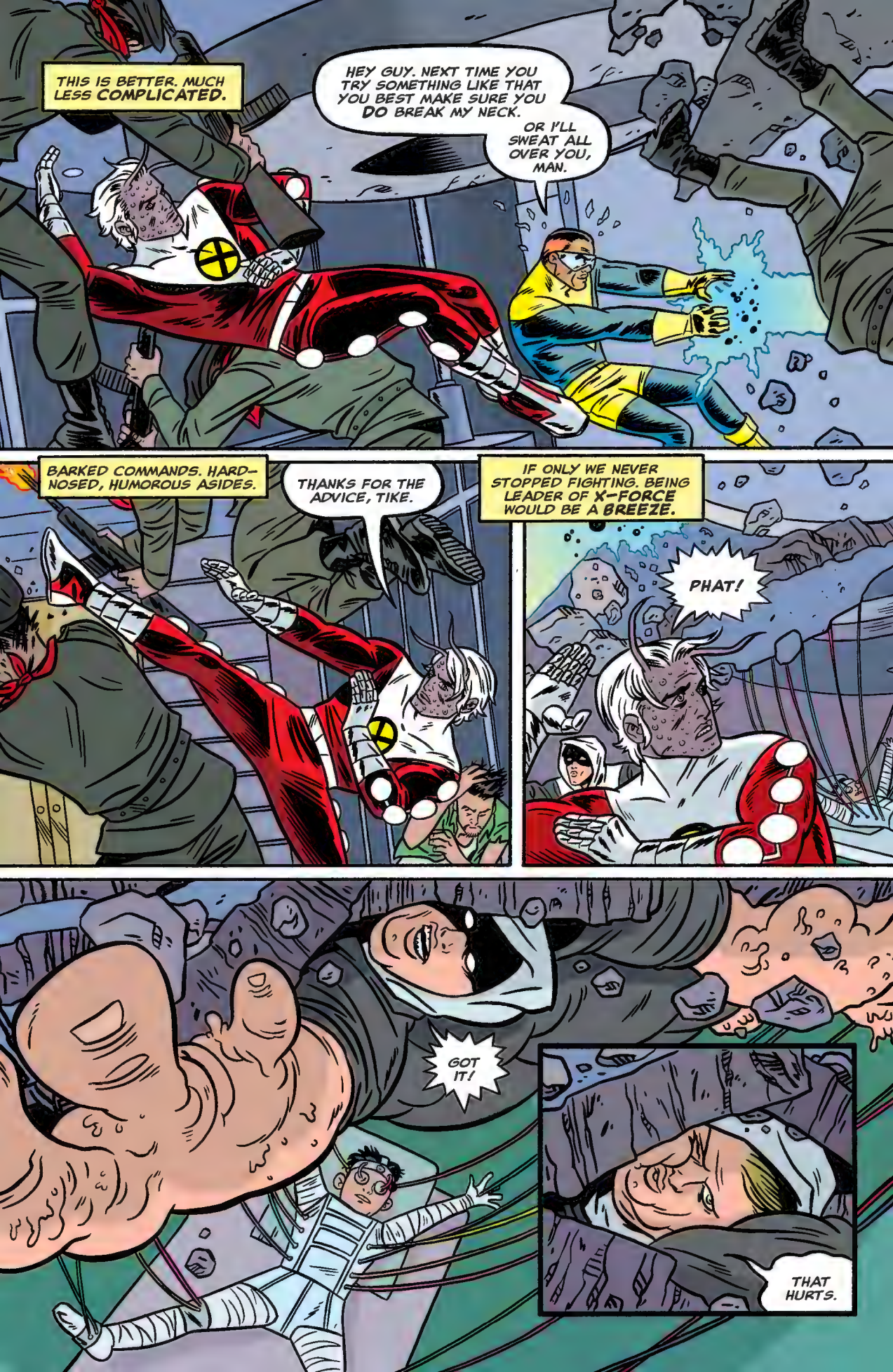

WHY SHOULD YOU KILL ME?
HOW ABOUT, YOU TRIED TO SELL US OUT?
BUT I DIDN'T KNOW YOU THEN. I HADN'T MET YOU. IT CAN HARDLY BE DESCRIBED AS SELLING OUT! LISTEN, I'M JUST LIKE YOU!
HEY, I DON'T SEE ANY PLAYTEX.

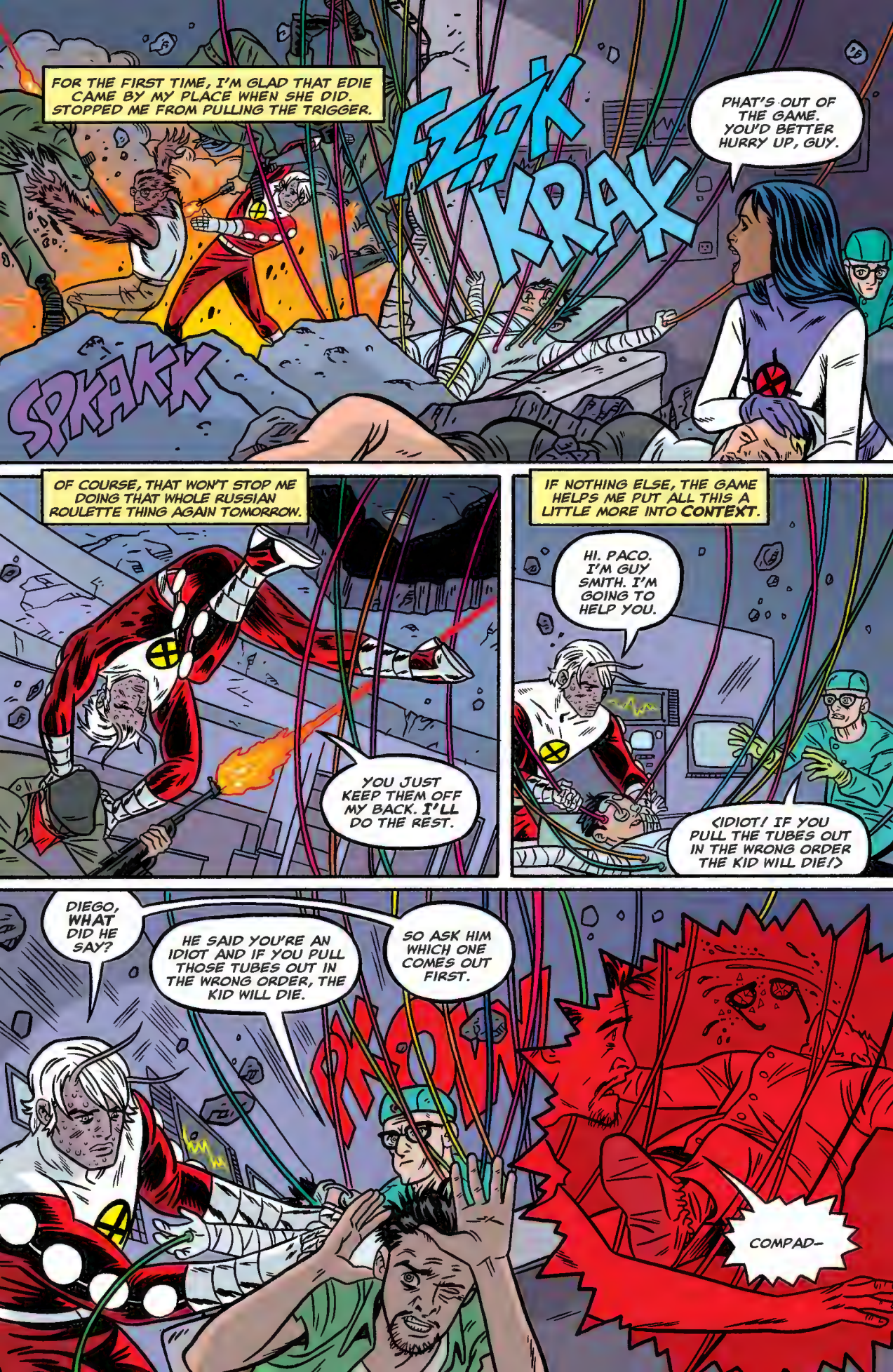
I MEAN, I'M JUST LIKE YOU AMERICANS. A CAPITALIST! SELLING HIS SERVICES TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER!
I WANT TO GO TO AMERICA, SEE. I WANT TO BE ENTERPRISING! AND BUYING A TICKET TO THE STATES COSTS BIG TIME.


DIEGO WILL TAKE US TO THE BOY. THEN WE CAN VOTE WHETHER WE KILL HIM OR NOT.
SOUNDS LIKE A REASONABLE COMPROMISE.
SOUNDS LIKE A WIMP WHO CAN'T MAKE A DECISION.
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE A MUTANT SUPER-TEAM! NOT THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.


DIEGO, TELL U-GO GIRL WHERE SHE SHOULD TAKE US.
WHAT ABOUT BLOKE? WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE HIM HERE.
RIGHT.
TIKE. VAPORIZE HIM.
GUY...
DO IT YOURSELF.
DO AS YOU'RE TOLD, TIKE. OR I BREAK YOUR NECK.
PLEASE BACK DOWN. DON'T FIGHT ME. I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT. ESPECIALLY NOT YOU.
WHAT DO YOU KNOW? WIMP'S GOT SOME STONES AFTER ALL.
NO, WIMP'S GOT LUCK.
THIS TIME.

ZKRAK
< WHAT THE HELL IS. . .>
I'LL GET PACO!
EDIE, BE READY TO GET US OUT OF HERE!
I'LL BE READY.


THIS IS BETTER. MUCH LESS COMPLICATED.
HEY GUY. NEXT TIME YOU TRY SOMETHING LIKE THAT YOU BEST MAKE SURE YOU DO BREAK MY NECK.
OR I'LL SWEAT ALL OVER YOU, MAN.
BARKED COMMANDS. HARD-NOSED, HUMOROUS ASIDES.
THANKS FOR THE ADVICE, TIKE.
IF ONLY WE NEVER STOPPED FIGHTING. BEING LEADER OF X-FORCE WOULD BE A BREEZE.
PHAT!
GOT IT!
THAT HURTS.

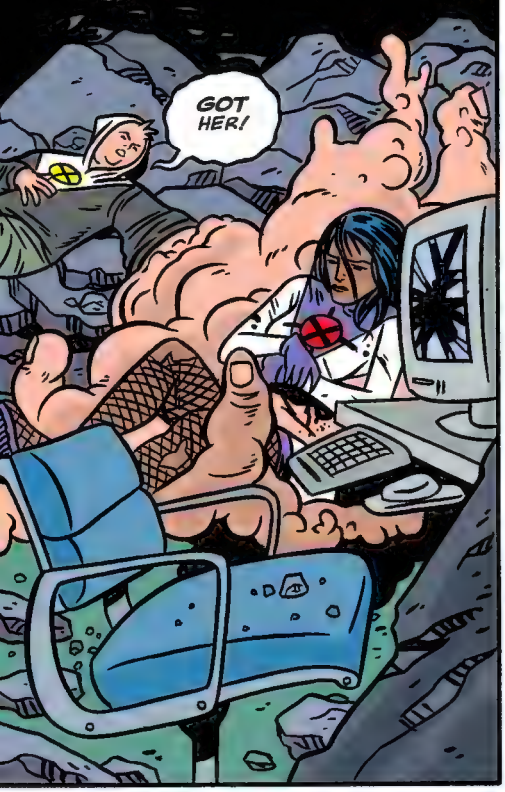

FOR THE FIRST TIME, I'M GLAD THAT EDIE CAME BY MY PLACE WHEN SHE DID. STOPPED ME FROM PULLING THE TRIGGER.
FZAK KRAK
SPKAKK
PHAT'S OUT OF THE GAME. YOU'D BETTER HURRY UP, GUY.
OF COURSE, THAT WON'T STOP ME DOING THAT WHOLE RUSSIAN ROULETTE THING AGAIN TOMORROW.
YOU JUST KEEP THEM OFF MY BACK. I'LL DO THE REST.
IF NOTHING ELSE, THE GAME HELPS ME PUT ALL THIS A LITTLE MORE INTO CONTEXT.
HI. PACO. I'M GUY SMITH. I'M GOING TO HELP YOU.
<IDIOT! IF YOU PULL THE TUBES OUT IN THE WRONG ORDER THE KID WILL DIE!>
DIEGO, WHAT DID HE SAY?
HE SAID YOU'RE AN IDIOT AND IF YOU PULL THOSE TUBES OUT IN THE WRONG ORDER, THE KID WILL DIE.
SO ASK HIM WHICH ONE COMES OUT FIRST.
ROOR
COMPAD-

LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO PLAY GOD, SENOR ORPHAN. LIFE AND DEATH IN YOUR HANDS.
OR MAYBE IT WOULD BE BEST IF I. . . IF WE JUST LEFT HIM HERE. . . MAYBE THAT WOULD BE SAFER. . .
HEY, LEADER, YOU'D BETTER MAKE YOUR MIND UP SOON—WE GOT TROUBLE!

ORPHAN, QUICK! I'VE GOT TO BE ON "LENO" IN FIVE!
BUT IF I PULL THE WRONG WIRE... THE BOY DIES!

X-FORCE #119

TWO TUBES HAVE BEEN STUCK INTO THE HEAD OF LITTLE PACO PEREZ. AND I HAVE TO PULL THEM OUT.
AND IF I DO IT IN THE WRONG ORDER, HE DIES.
ORPHAN, WE'RE GETTING OUR BUTTS KICKED HERE! YOU'VE GOTTA MAKE A DECISION!
SOMETHING HE SEEMS TO BE PREDISPOSED NOT TO DO.
WOW... DO I FEEL WIPED.
STAY AWAKE AND ALERT, EDIE. WE'RE GOING TO NEED YOU TO GET US OUT OF HERE.
YAWWN
STOP WORRYING ABOUT ME...
...AND START WORRYING ABOUT... SAINT ANNA...

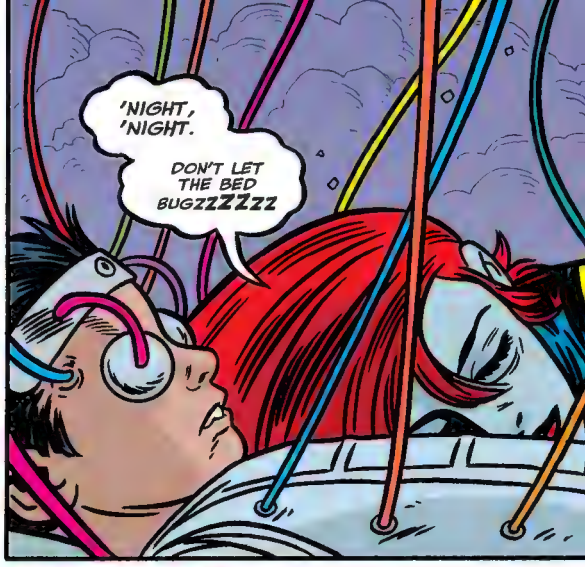


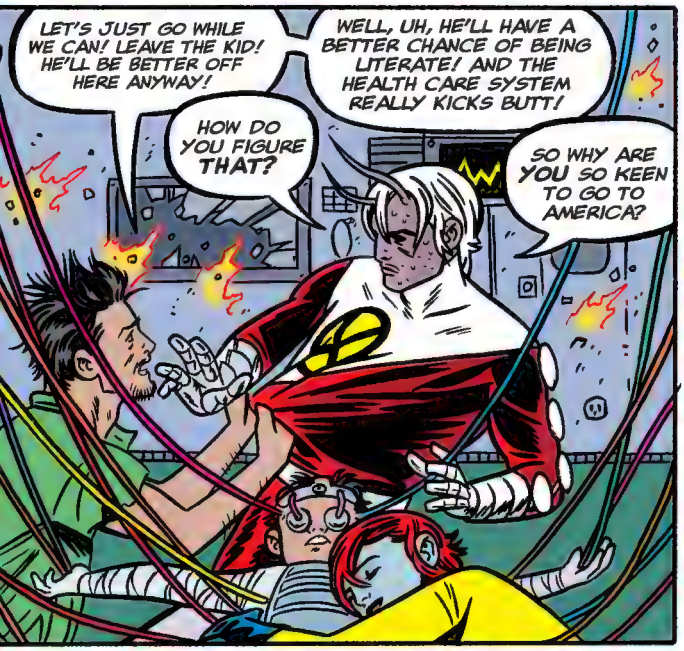
GEEK ON THE RAMPAGE!

TO HELL WITH HAMLET! TO HELL WITH WITTGENSTEIN! I WANT BLOOD! I WANT PAIN!

ARE YOU WATCHING, PA!?!

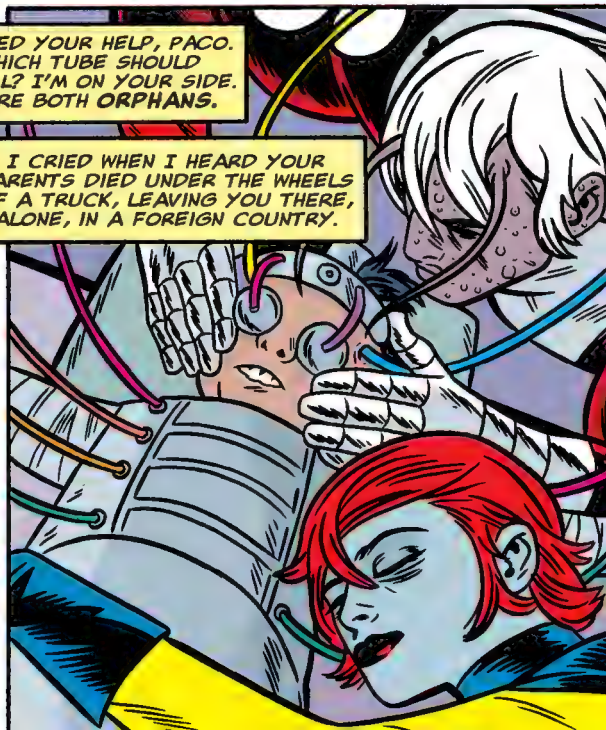
IT'S A PSYCHOLOGICAL PHENOMENON THAT HAPPENS SOMETIMES WITH THE NEW ONES. IF YOU HAD REAL LEADERSHIP QUALITIES YOU'D HAVE. . .
SEEN. . .IT. . . COMING.

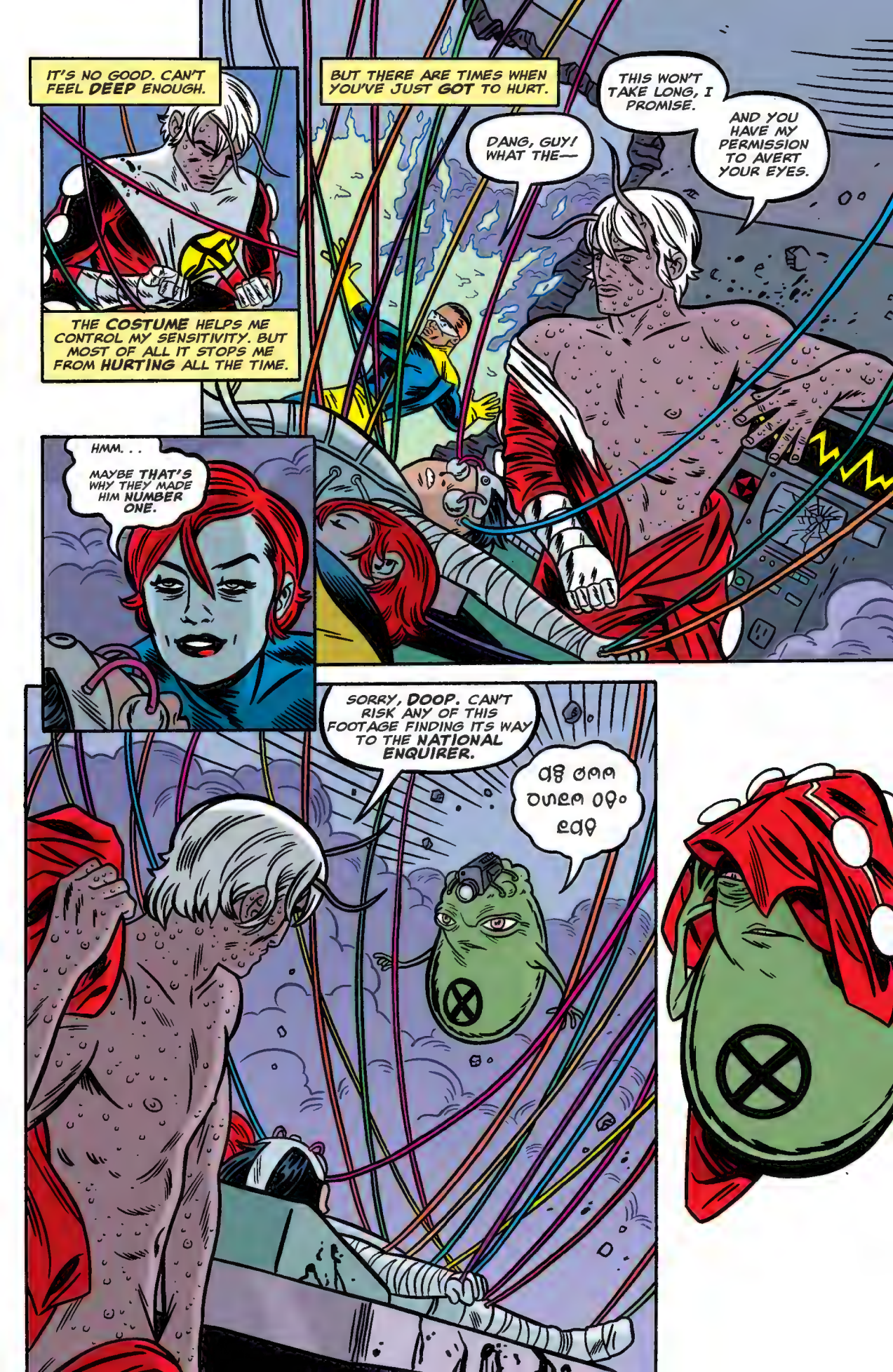

'NIGHT, 'NIGHT.
DON'T LET THE BED BUGZZZZZZ

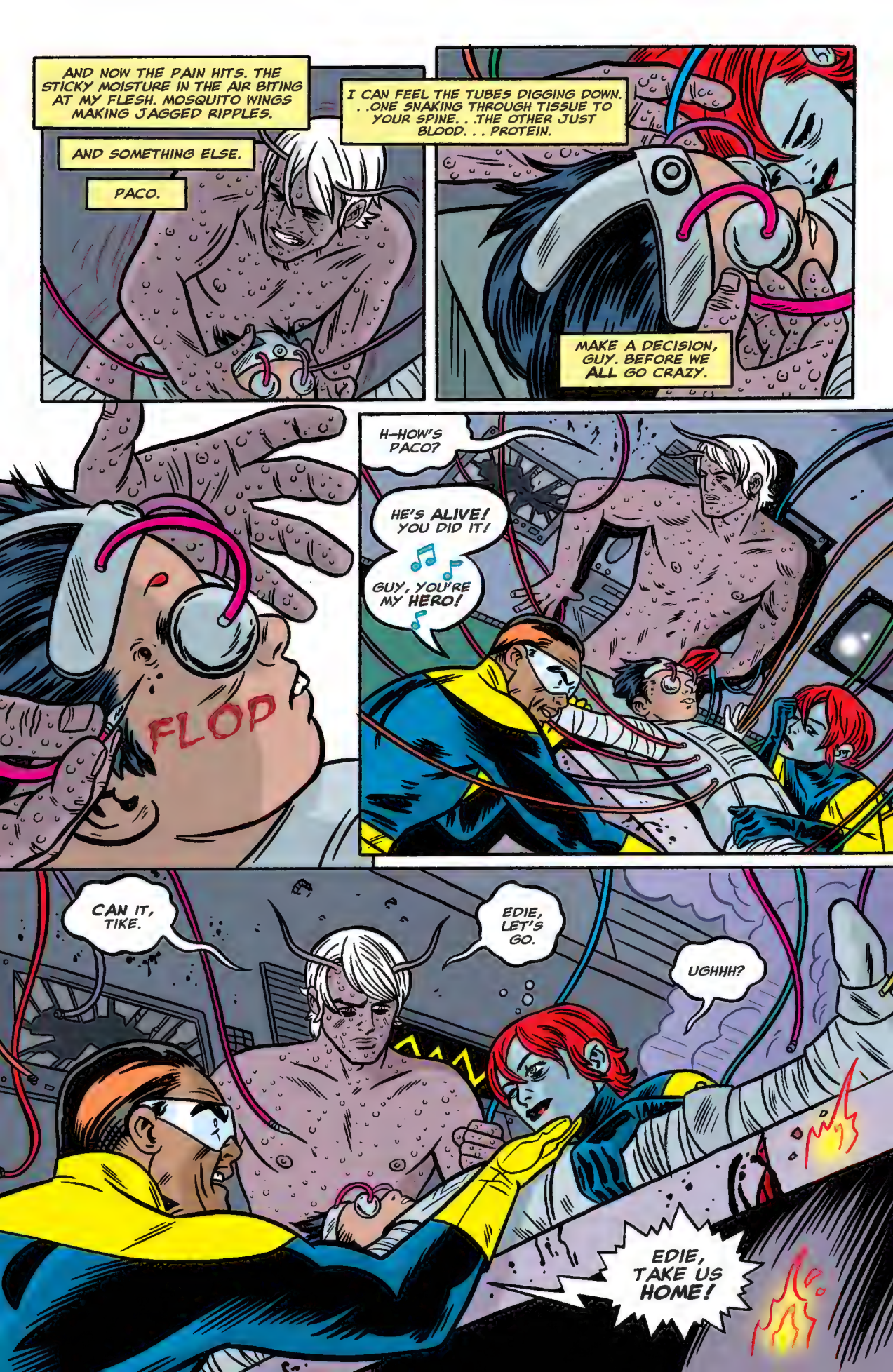

LET'S JUST GO WHILE WE CAN! LEAVE THE KID! HE'LL BE BETTER OFF HERE ANYWAY!
WELL, UH, HE'LL HAVE A BETTER CHANCE OF BEING LITERATE! AND THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM REALLY KICKS BUTT!
HOW DO YOU FIGURE THAT?
SO WHY ARE YOU SO KEEN TO GO TO AMERICA?

BECAUSE I—
URGHK!

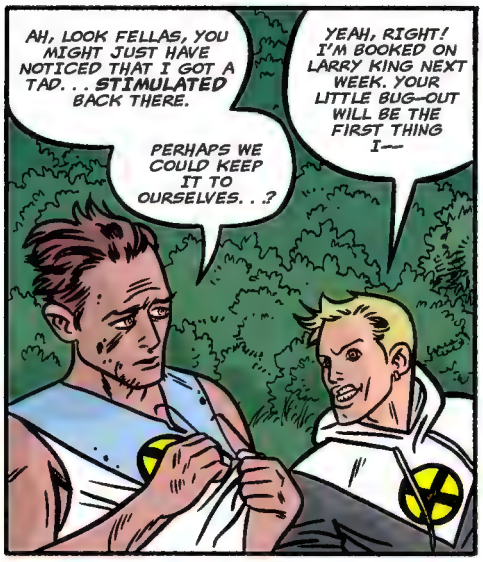
GUESS THAT SAVES US THE HASSLE OF HAVIN' TO VOTE WHAT TO DO WITH HIM.
WE'RE NOT LEAVING WITHOUT HIM.
HE HAD A POINT, THOUGH, SENOR SMITH. MAYBE WE SHOULD JUST QUIT WHILE WE'RE BEHIND.

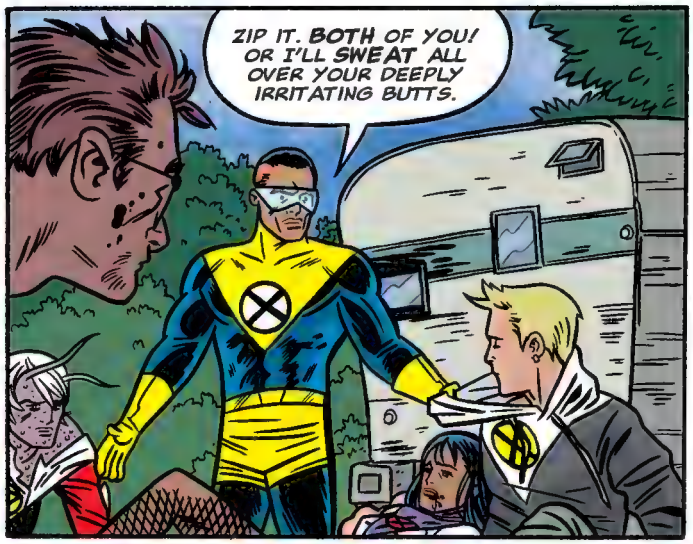

I NEED YOUR HELP, PACO. WHICH TUBE SHOULD I PULL? I'M ON YOUR SIDE. WE'RE BOTH ORPHANS.
I CRIED WHEN I HEARD YOUR PARENTS DIED UNDER THE WHEELS OF A TRUCK, LEAVING YOU THERE, ALONE, IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY.


IT'S NO GOOD. CAN'T FEEL DEEP ENOUGH.
THE COSTUME HELPS ME CONTROL MY SENSITIVITY. BUT MOST OF ALL IT STOPS ME FROM HURTING ALL THE TIME.
BUT THERE ARE TIMES WHEN YOU'VE JUST GOT TO HURT.
DANG, GUY! WHAT THE—
THIS WON'T TAKE LONG, I PROMISE.
AND YOU HAVE MY PERMISSION TO AVERT YOUR EYES.
HMM. . .
MAYBE THAT'S WHY THEY MADE HIM NUMBER ONE.
SORRY, DOOP. CAN'T RISK ANY OF THIS FOOTAGE FINDING ITS WAY TO THE NATIONAL ENQUIRER.


AND NOW THE PAIN HITS. THE STICKY MOISTURE IN THE AIR BITING AT MY FLESH. MOSQUITO WINGS MAKING JAGGED RIPPLES.
AND SOMETHING ELSE.
PACO.
I CAN FEEL THE TUBES DIGGING DOWN. . .ONE SNAKING THROUGH TISSUE TO YOUR SPINE. . .THE OTHER JUST BLOOD. . . PROTEIN.
MAKE A DECISION, GUY. BEFORE WE ALL GO CRAZY.
FLOP
H–HOW'S PACO?
HE'S ALIVE! YOU DID IT!
GUY, YOU'RE MY HERO!
CAN IT, TIKE.
EDIE, LET'S GO.
UGHHH?
EDIE, TAKE US HOME!

STAN LEE PRESENTS
WHAT'S ONE LIFE?
WHERE ARE WE?
NO IDEA.
BUT IT SURE AS HELL AIN'T SANTA MONICA.

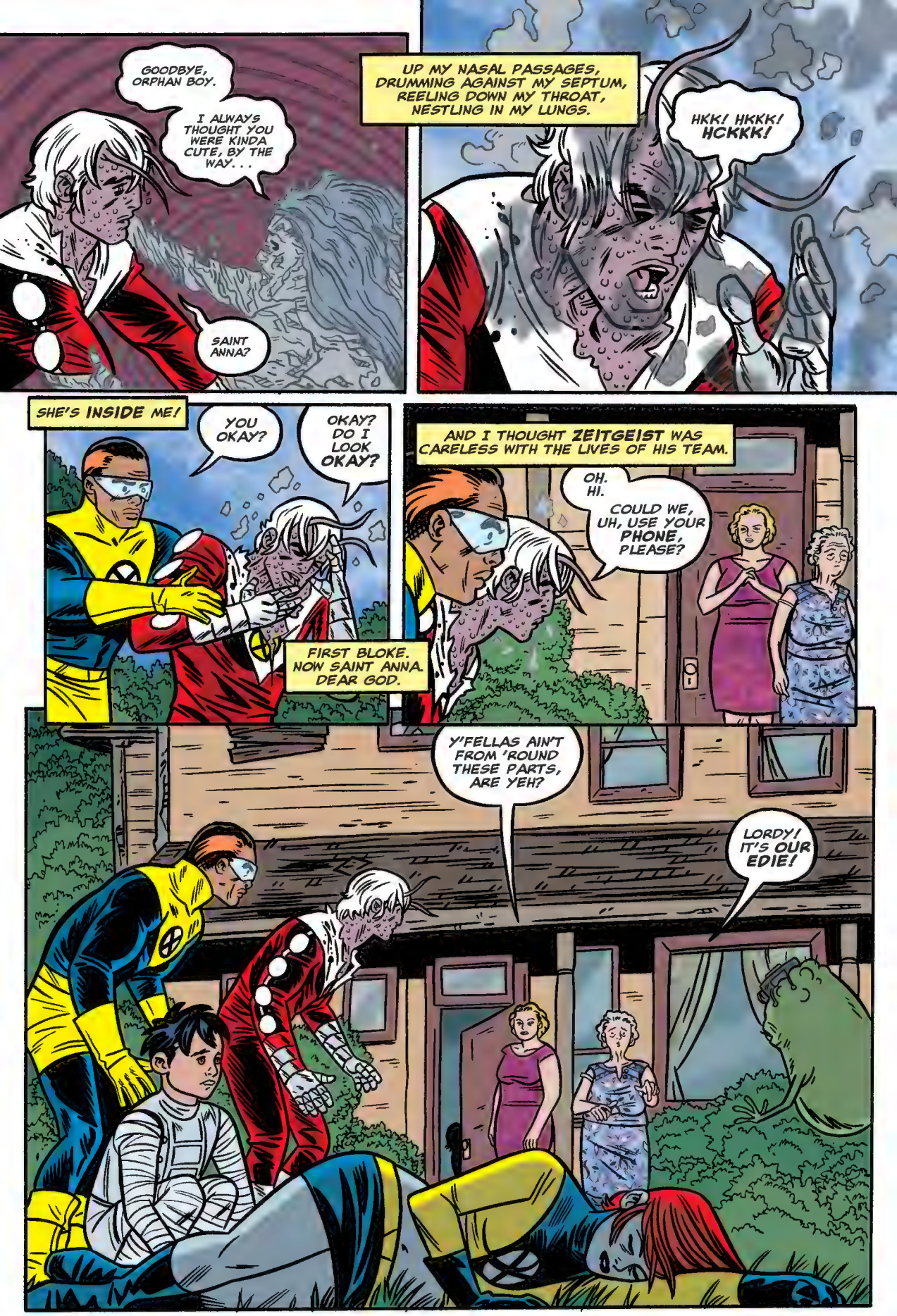

AH, LOOK FELLAS, YOU MIGHT JUST HAVE NOTICED THAT I GOT A TAD. . . STIMULATED BACK THERE.
PERHAPS WE COULD KEEP IT TO OURSELVES. . ?
YEAH, RIGHT! I'M BOOKED ON LARRY KING NEXT WEEK. YOUR LITTLE BUG-OUT WILL BE THE FIRST THING I—

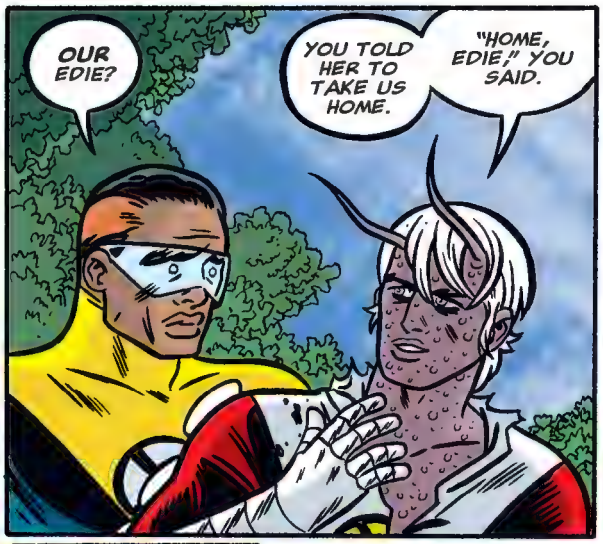

ZIP IT. BOTH OF YOU! OR I'LL SWEAT ALL OVER YOUR DEEPLY IRRITATING BUTTS.

YOU PROMISE. . . YOU'LL FIND HIM. . . YOU'LL GIVE HIM MY MOTHER'S RING?
SAINT ANNA. . . I. . .

PROMISE ME! OR SO HELP ME I'LL CLAW MY WAY OUT OF HELL IF I HAVE TO AND HAUNT YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN AND YOUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN.

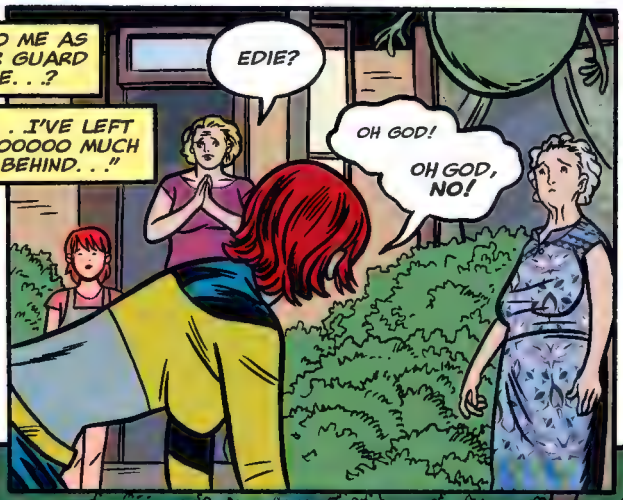
IF YOU PUT IT THAT WAY! YES! I'LL GO TO ARGENTINA. I'LL FIND YOUR FATHER.
NOW I CAN LET GO.


GOODBYE, ORPHAN BOY.
I ALWAYS THOUGHT YOU WERE KINDA CUTE, BY THE WAY...
SAINT ANNA?
UP MY NASAL PASSAGES, DRUMMING AGAINST MY SEPTUM, REELING DOWN MY THROAT, NESTLING IN MY LUNGS.
HKK! HKKK! HCKKK!
SHE'S INSIDE ME!
YOU OKAY?
OKAY? DO I LOOK OKAY?
FIRST BLOKE. NOW SAINT ANNA. DEAR GOD.
AND I THOUGHT ZEITGEIST WAS CARELESS WITH THE LIVES OF HIS TEAM.
OH. HI.
COULD WE, UH, USE YOUR PHONE, PLEASE?
Y'FELLAS AIN'T FROM 'ROUND THESE PARTS, ARE YEH?
LORDY! IT'S OUR EDIE!

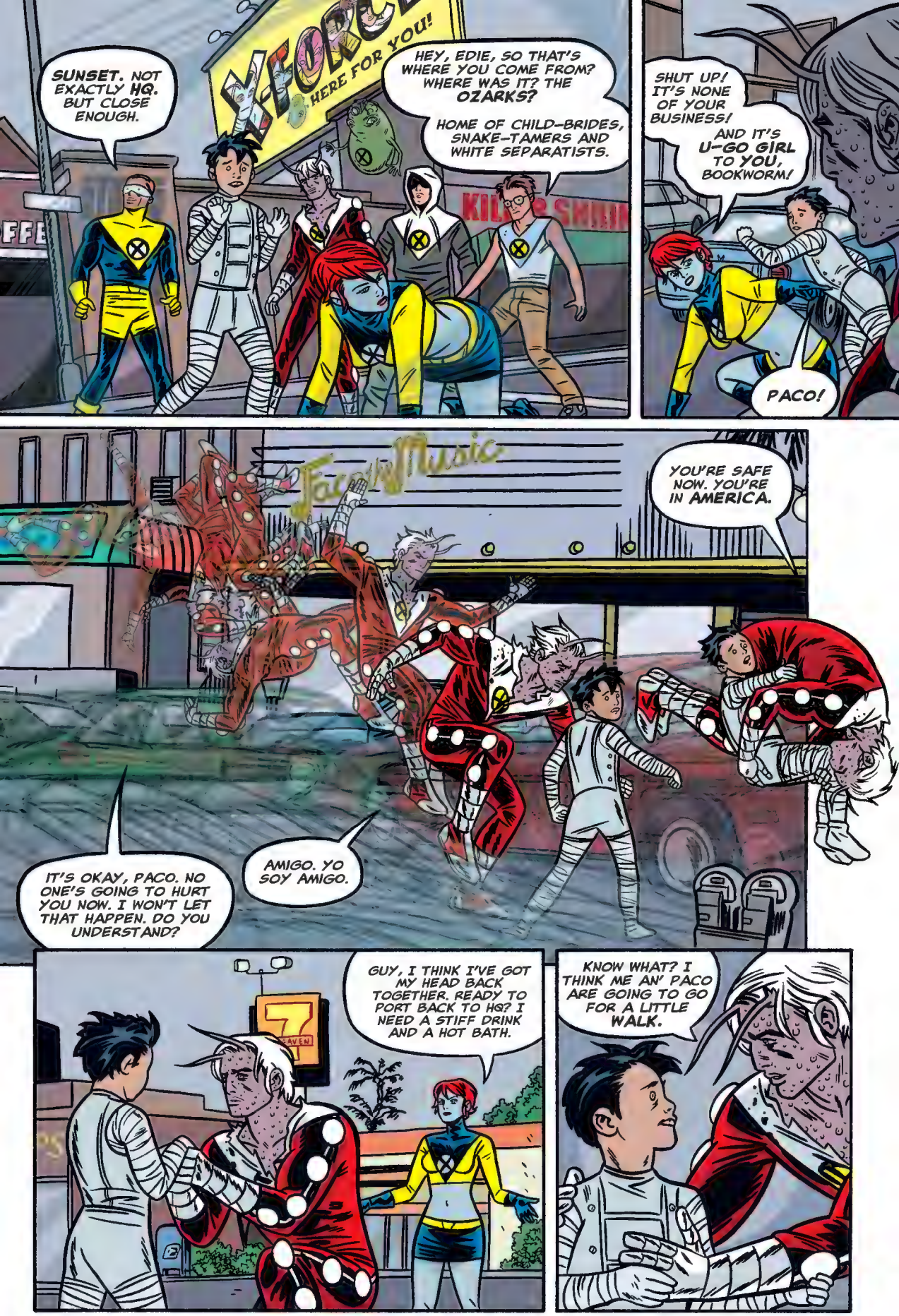

OUR EDIE?
YOU TOLD HER TO TAKE US HOME.
"HOME, EDIE," YOU SAID.

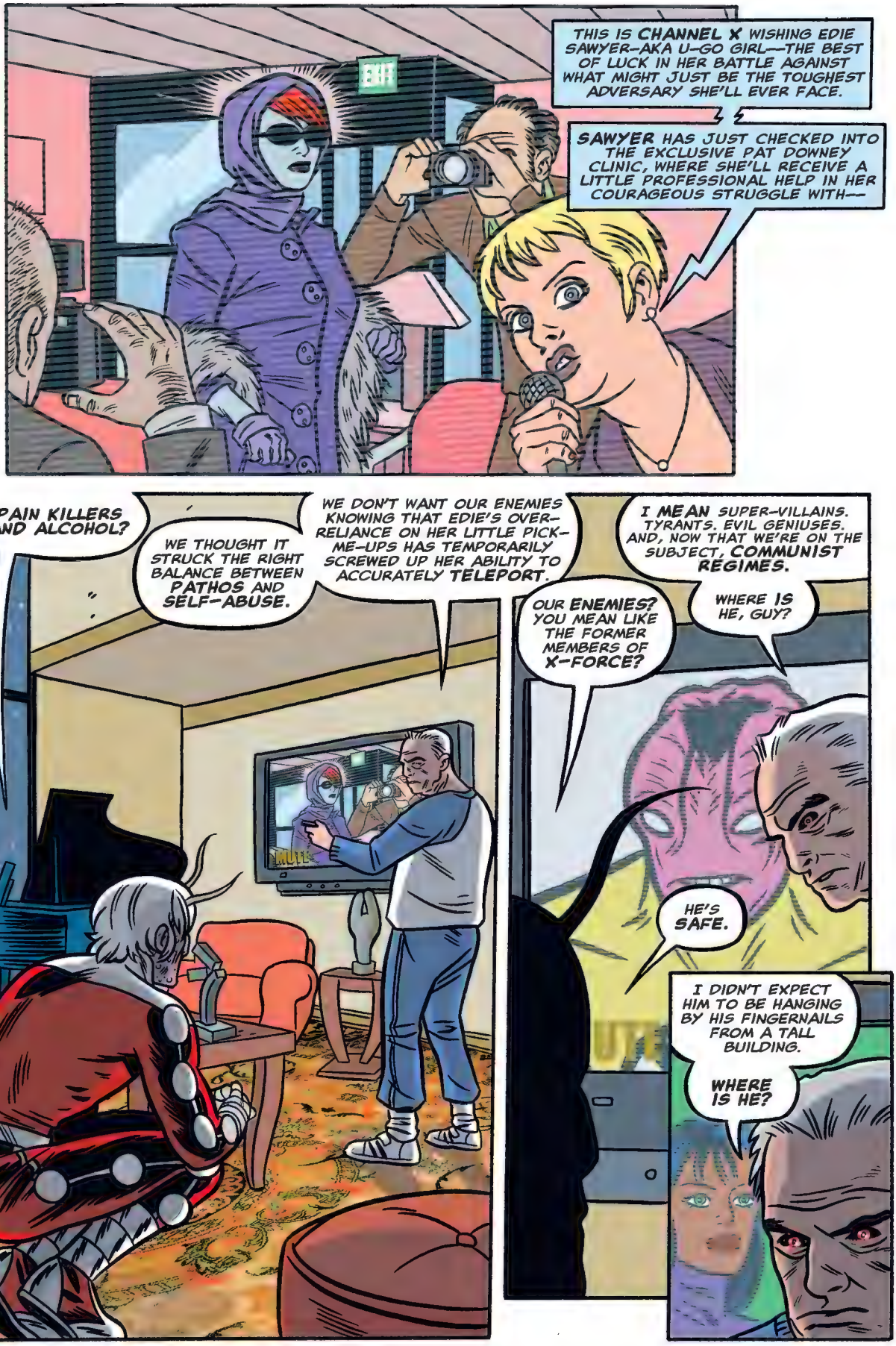
WHO'S THAT LADY?
THAT'S... YER BIG SISTER–
YER TOO YOUNG TO 'MEMBER HER, KATIE.

THAT FACE. THOSE EYES. THAT MIX OF HARD AND SOFT.
WHAT DID EDIE SAY TO ME AS SHE FELL ASLEEP, HER GUARD DROPPING FOR ONCE...?
"...I'VE LEFT SOOOOO MUCH BEHIND..."

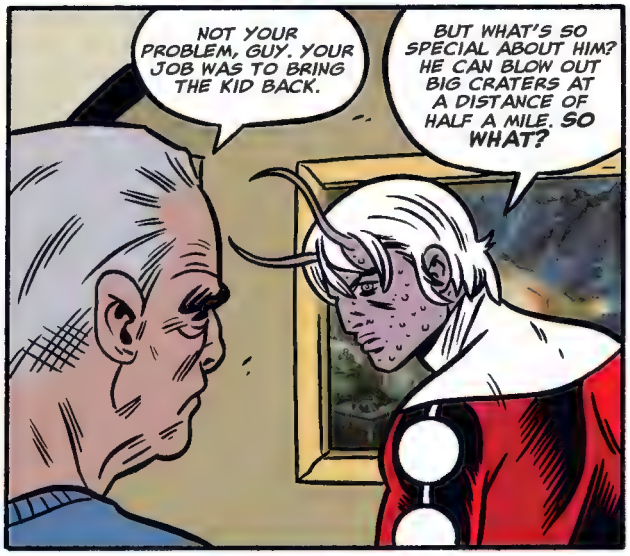

EDIE?
OH GOD!
OH GOD, NO!

EDIE!

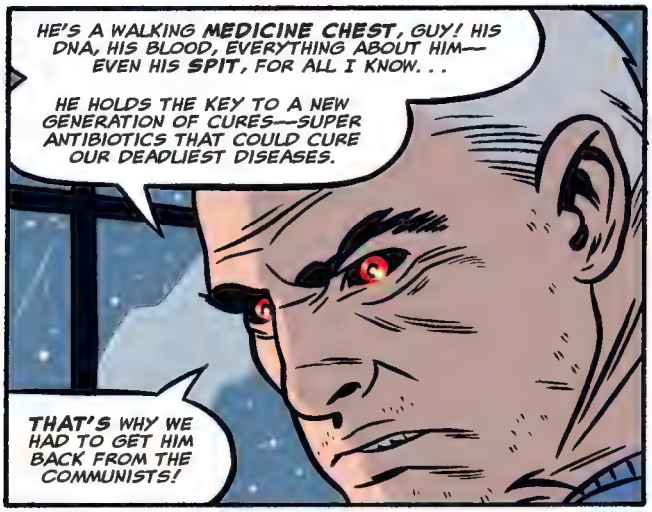

SUNSET. NOT EXACTLY HQ. BUT CLOSE ENOUGH.
HERE FOR YOU!
HEY, EDIE, SO THAT'S WHERE YOU COME FROM? WHERE WAS IT? THE OZARKS?
HOME OF CHILD-BRIDES, SNAKE-TAMERS AND WHITE SEPARATISTS.
SHUT UP! IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS!
AND IT'S U-GO GIRL TO YOU, BOOKWORM!
PACO!
YOU'RE SAFE NOW. YOU'RE IN AMERICA.
IT'S OKAY, PACO. NO ONE'S GOING TO HURT YOU NOW. I WON'T LET THAT HAPPEN. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
AMIGO. YO SOY AMIGO.
GUY, I THINK I'VE GOT MY HEAD BACK TOGETHER. READY TO PORT BACK TO HQ? I NEED A STIFF DRINK AND A HOT BATH.
KNOW WHAT? I THINK ME AN' PACO ARE GOING TO GO FOR A LITTLE WALK.


THIS IS CHANNEL X WISHING EDIE SAWYER-AKA U-GO GIRL—THE BEST OF LUCK IN HER BATTLE AGAINST WHAT MIGHT JUST BE THE TOUGHEST ADVERSARY SHE'LL EVER FACE.
SAWYER HAS JUST CHECKED INTO THE EXCLUSIVE PAT DOWNEY CLINIC, WHERE SHE'LL RECEIVE A LITTLE PROFESSIONAL HELP IN HER COURAGEOUS STRUGGLE WITH—
PAIN KILLERS AND ALCOHOL?
WE THOUGHT IT STRUCK THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN PATHOS AND SELF-ABUSE.
WE DON'T WANT OUR ENEMIES KNOWING THAT EDIE'S OVER-RELIANCE ON HER LITTLE PICK-ME-UPS HAS TEMPORARILY SCREWED UP HER ABILITY TO ACCURATELY TELEPORT.
MUTE
I MEAN SUPER-VILLAINS. TYRANTS. EVIL GENIUSES. AND, NOW THAT WE'RE ON THE SUBJECT, COMMUNIST REGIMES.
OUR ENEMIES? YOU MEAN LIKE THE FORMER MEMBERS OF X-FORCE?
WHERE IS HE, GUY?
HE'S SAFE.
I DIDN'T EXPECT HIM TO BE HANGING BY HIS FINGERNAILS FROM A TALL BUILDING.
WHERE IS HE?

PACO'S BEEN THROUGH HELL. HE HASN'T SAID A WORD SINCE WE FOUND HIM. AND CAN YOU **BLAME** HIM?
FIRST HE LOSES HIS PARENTS. THEN HE'S DRAGGED BACK TO THE PLACE HE ESCAPED FROM AND STUCK THROUGH WITH TUBES. AND THEN HE'S **"RESCUED"** BY A BUNCH OF CRAZY MUTANTS IN BRIGHT-COLORED SPANDEX.


NOT YOUR PROBLEM, GUY. YOUR JOB WAS TO BRING THE KID BACK.
BUT WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT HIM? HE CAN BLOW OUT BIG CRATERS AT A DISTANCE OF HALF A MILE. **SO WHAT?**

ALL RIGHT. OUR FINANCIERS WANTED TO KEEP THIS QUIET BUT THAT'S NOT ALL THAT PABLO—
THAT **PACO** CAN DO.
PACO.

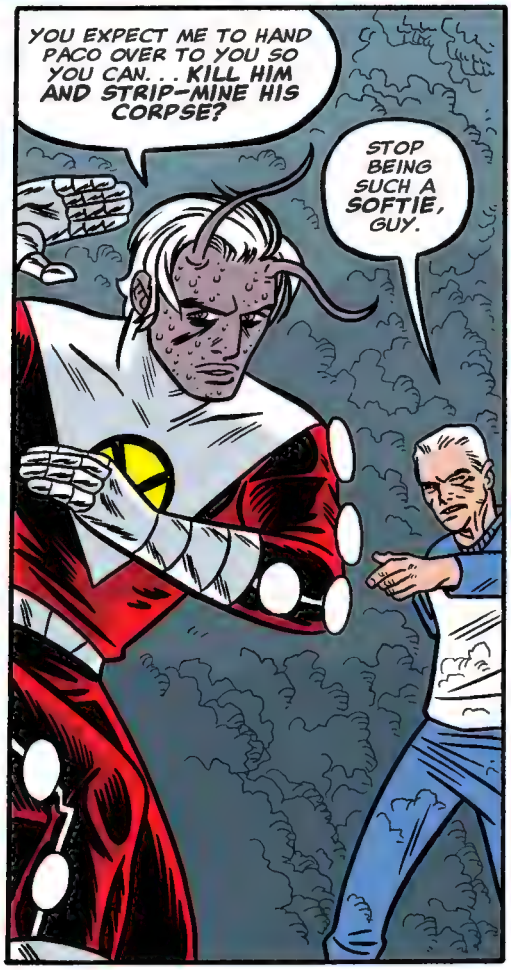

HE'S A WALKING **MEDICINE CHEST**, GUY! HIS DNA, HIS BLOOD, EVERYTHING ABOUT HIM—EVEN HIS **SPIT**, FOR ALL I KNOW. . .
HE HOLDS THE KEY TO A NEW GENERATION OF CURES—SUPER ANTIBIOTICS THAT COULD CURE OUR DEADLIEST DISEASES.
THAT'S WHY WE HAD TO GET HIM BACK FROM THE COMMUNISTS!

SO SOMEONE COULD MAKE MONEY FROM HIM?
NOW YOU'VE GOT IT!

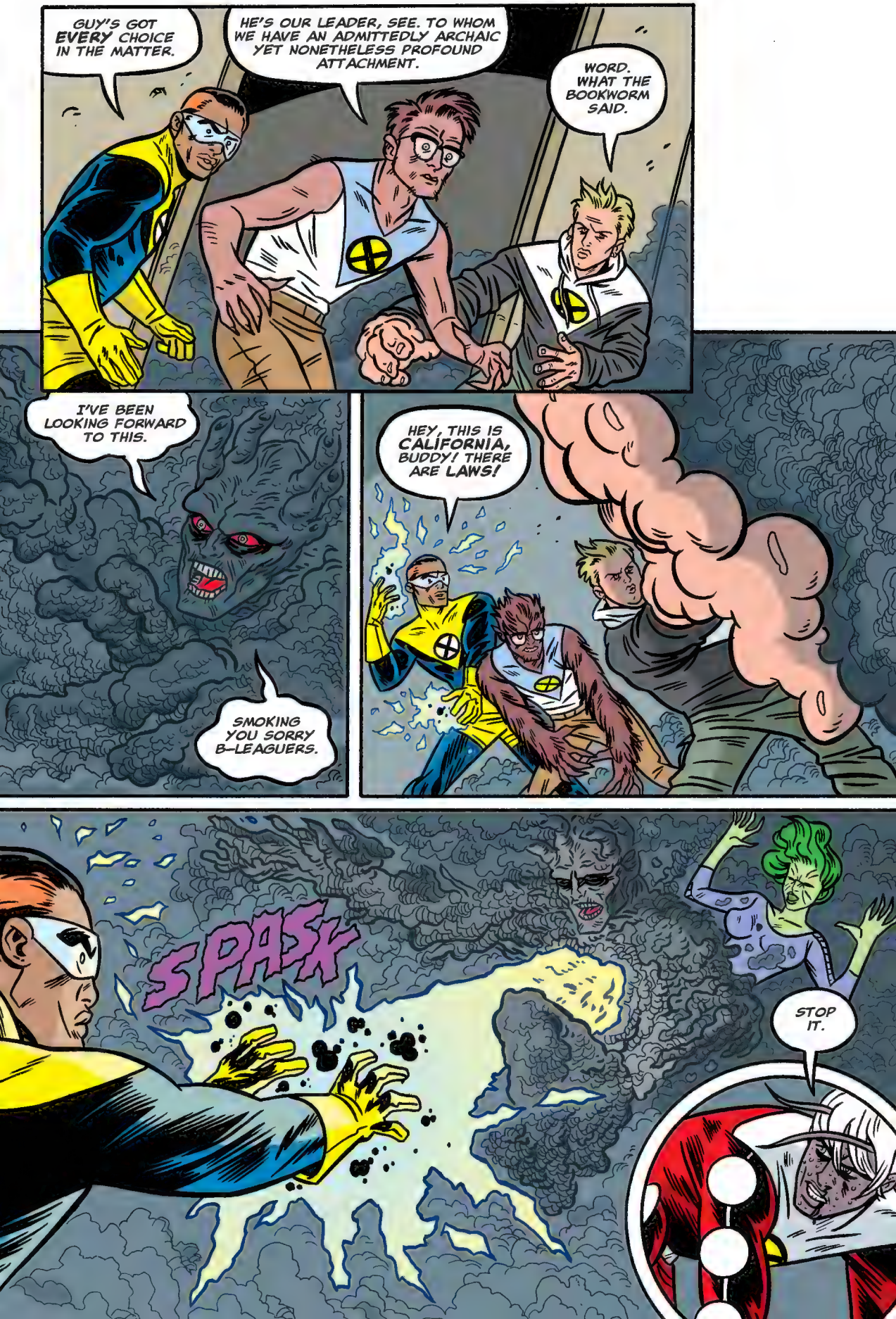
AND WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT? SO SOME PEOPLE MAKE MONEY. THAT MEANS THE DRUGS ARE MADE FASTER AND BETTER. THAT MEANS MORE PEOPLE BENEFIT.
IT'S CALLED FREE ENTERPRISE, GUY.
IT'S CALLED PROGRESS.
AND WHAT ABOUT PACO? HOW DOES HE FIGURE INTO THIS "FREE ENTERPRISE" SCHEME? WHAT KIND OF SHAPE IS HE GOING TO BE IN WHEN THIS IS ALL OVER?
I'M TALKING TO YOU, COACH!
A GOOD COACH ALWAYS MAKES CONTINGENCY PLANS... IN CASE HIS GAME-PLAN DOESN'T GO QUITE ACCORDING TO... WELL, UH...
...PLAN.
KERSH
SAY HELLO TO SMOKE.
—AND GOODBYE TO YOUR HEALTH.

AND THIS IS THE LOVELY SUCCUBUS.
—AND TALENTED.

YOU SEE, GUY. WHEN THIS IS THROUGH, PACO ISN'T GOING TO BE IN ANY SHAPE WHATSOEVER.
PEOPLE WHO KNOW A LOT MORE ABOUT THE TECHNICAL SIDE OF THESE THINGS HAVE ASSURED ME THAT TO REALLY GET THE MAXIMUM YIELD OUT OF PACO. . .
WELL, PROGRESS REQUIRES SACRIFICE.

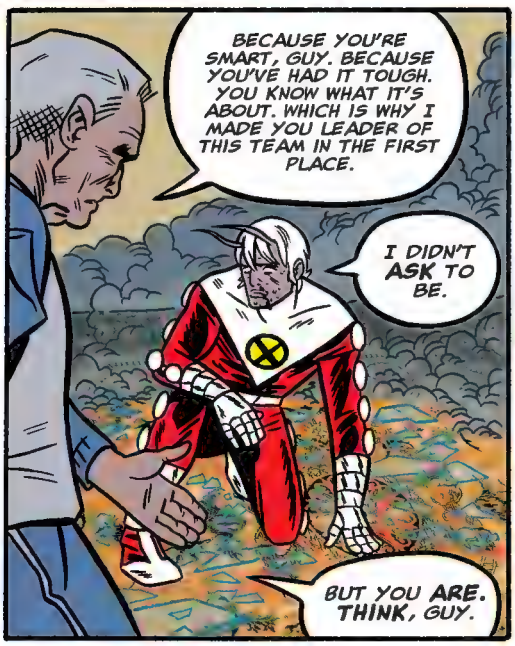

YOU EXPECT ME TO HAND PACO OVER TO YOU SO YOU CAN. . . KILL HIM AND STRIP-MINE HIS CORPSE?
STOP BEING SUCH A SOFTIE, GUY.

THOK
AND ANYWAY, YOU REALLY HAVE NO CHOICE IN THE MATTER.
CORRECTION.
DAMN.

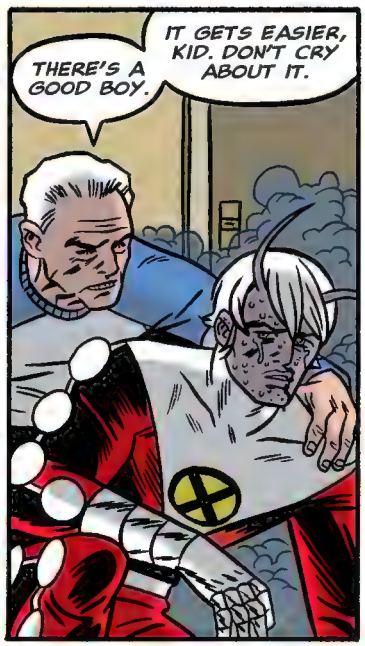

GUY'S GOT EVERY CHOICE IN THE MATTER.
HE'S OUR LEADER, SEE. TO WHOM WE HAVE AN ADMITTEDLY ARCHAIC YET NONETHELESS PROFOUND ATTACHMENT.
WORD. WHAT THE BOOKWORM SAID.
I'VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS.
SMOKING YOU SORRY B-LEAGUERS.
HEY, THIS IS CALIFORNIA, BUDDY! THERE ARE LAWS!
SPASK
STOP IT.

EVERYONE! STOP IT!

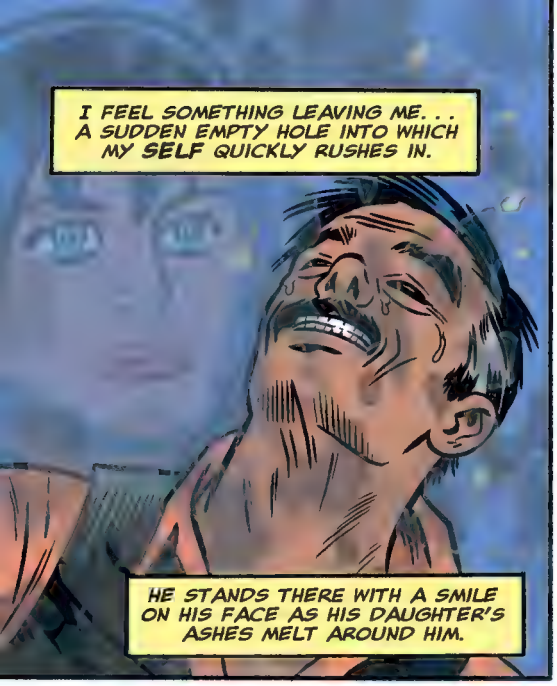
KILLING EACH OTHER WON'T SOLVE A THING.
HE'S RIGHT. LIKE ALWAYS.
AND HE'S GOING TO MAKE THE RIGHT DECISION.


BECAUSE YOU'RE SMART, GUY. BECAUSE YOU'VE HAD IT TOUGH. YOU KNOW WHAT IT'S ABOUT. WHICH IS WHY I MADE YOU LEADER OF THIS TEAM IN THE FIRST PLACE.
I DIDN'T ASK TO BE.
BUT YOU ARE. THINK, GUY.

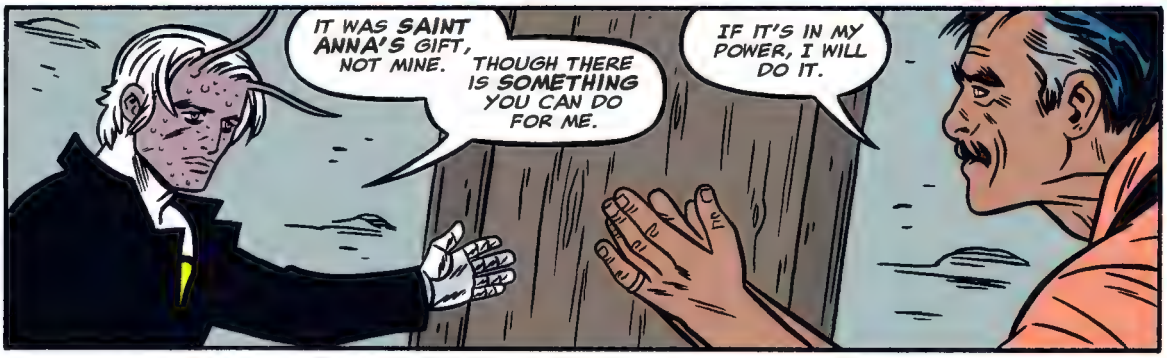
WHAT'S ONE LIFE?
ONE LIFE, COMPARED TO THE LIVES THAT MIGHT BE SAVED OR IMPROVED? I KNOW IT'S TOUGH, BUT BEING LEADER MEANS MAKING TOUGH DECISIONS.

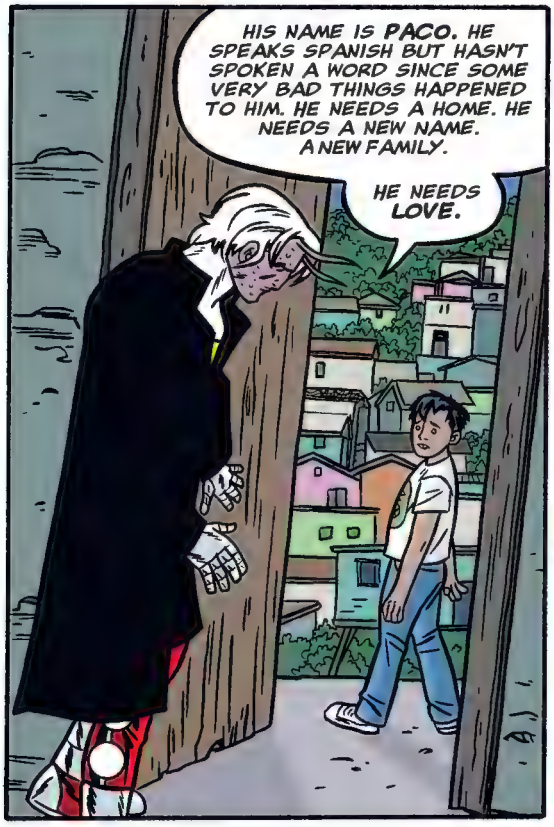

THERE'S A GOOD BOY.
IT GETS EASIER, KID. DON'T CRY ABOUT IT.

BUENOS AIRES.
IT'S OKAY. I'LL STOP CRYING IN A MINUTE.
TAKE YOUR TIME.
YOU WORK WITH POOR KIDS?
MOSTLY. THOUGH IT'S BEEN A. . . SECULAR PLACE FOR SOME TIME NOW.
YOU LEFT THE PRIESTHOOD?
BEFORE I WAS PUSHED.
WHAT WAS SHE LIKE, MISTER SMITH? MY DAUGHTER?
TO BE HONEST, I NEVER GOT TO KNOW HER AS WELL AS I WOULD HAVE LIKED. THOUGH I COULD TELL THAT SHE WAS A GOOD PERSON, A KIND PERSON.
I'M SORRY I CAN'T GIVE YOU MORE.
ARE YOU OKAY, MISTER SMITH?
YEAH. . .THINK . . . I'M GOING TO. . . SNEE— ACHHH— ACHHH--
CHOOO!

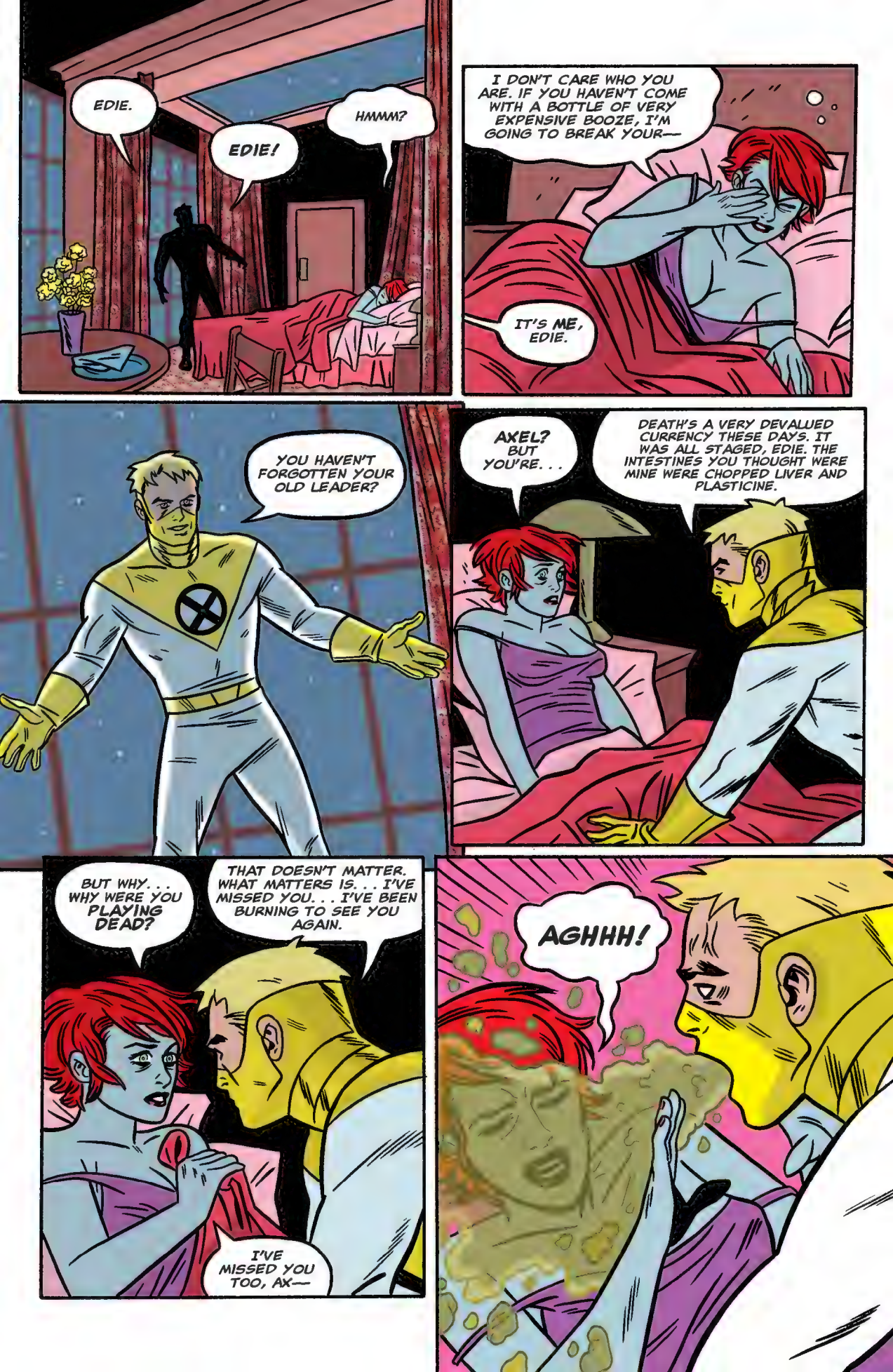

I FEEL SOMETHING LEAVING ME. . . A SUDDEN EMPTY HOLE INTO WHICH MY SELF QUICKLY RUSHES IN.
HE STANDS THERE WITH A SMILE ON HIS FACE AS HIS DAUGHTER'S ASHES MELT AROUND HIM.

IT'S FIVE MINUTES BEFORE HE CAN SPEAK.
I SAW HER! I SAW MY DAUGHTER. BEING BORN, GROWING UP. SO MUCH. . . I KNOW HER, SENOR SMITH! I HAVE MEMORIES OF HER. . . MEMORIES OF THINGS AND PLACES THAT I HAVE NEVER EXPERIENCED. . .
THANK YOU! HOW CAN I EVER REPAY YOU FOR THIS. . . FOR THIS GIFT?


IT WAS SAINT ANNA'S GIFT, NOT MINE.
THOUGH THERE IS SOMETHING YOU CAN DO FOR ME.
IF IT'S IN MY POWER, I WILL DO IT.

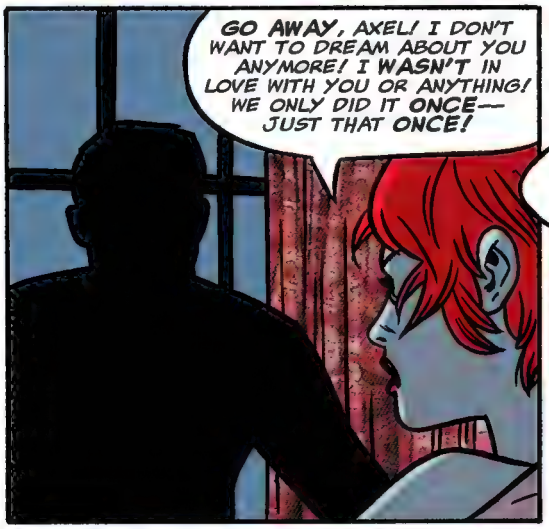

HIS NAME IS PACO. HE SPEAKS SPANISH BUT HASN'T SPOKEN A WORD SINCE SOME VERY BAD THINGS HAPPENED TO HIM. HE NEEDS A HOME. HE NEEDS A NEW NAME. A NEW FAMILY.
HE NEEDS LOVE.

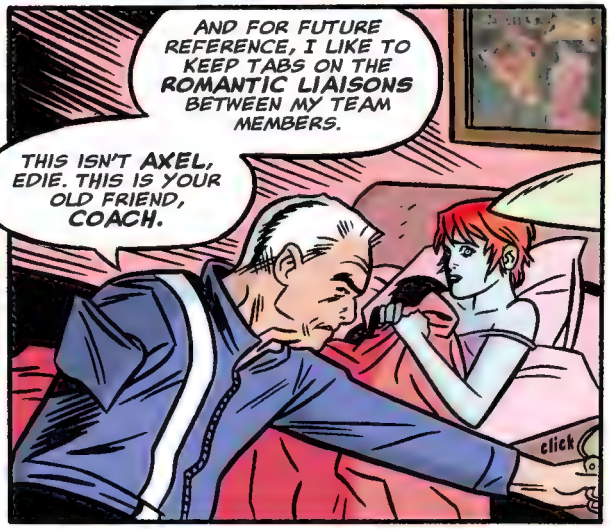
WE ALL NEED THAT, MISTER SMITH.


EDIE.
EDIE!
HMMM?
I DON'T CARE WHO YOU ARE. IF YOU HAVEN'T COME WITH A BOTTLE OF VERY EXPENSIVE BOOZE, I'M GOING TO BREAK YOUR—
IT'S ME, EDIE.
YOU HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN YOUR OLD LEADER?
AXEL? BUT YOU'RE. . .
DEATH'S A VERY DEVALUED CURRENCY THESE DAYS. IT WAS ALL STAGED, EDIE. THE INTESTINES YOU THOUGHT WERE MINE WERE CHOPPED LIVER AND PLASTICINE.
BUT WHY. . . WHY WERE YOU PLAYING DEAD?
THAT DOESN'T MATTER. WHAT MATTERS IS. . . I'VE MISSED YOU. . . I'VE BEEN BURNING TO SEE YOU AGAIN.
I'VE MISSED YOU TOO, AX—
AGHHH!

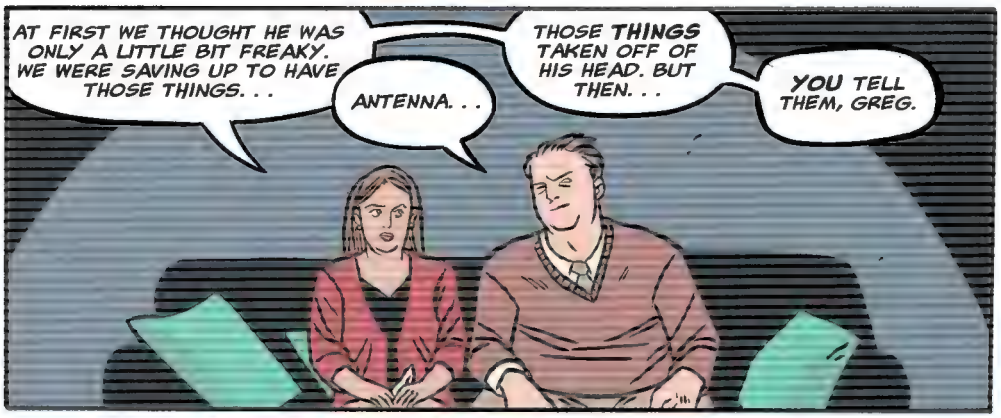
AGGHHHH!

OH. OH GOD.
BAD DREAM?


GO AWAY, AXEL! I DON'T WANT TO DREAM ABOUT YOU ANYMORE! I WASN'T IN LOVE WITH YOU OR ANYTHING! WE ONLY DID IT ONCE— JUST THAT ONCE!


AND FOR FUTURE REFERENCE, I LIKE TO KEEP TABS ON THE ROMANTIC LIAISONS BETWEEN MY TEAM MEMBERS.
THIS ISN'T AXEL, EDIE. THIS IS YOUR OLD FRIEND, COACH.
click

KRAK
YOU $#*%!

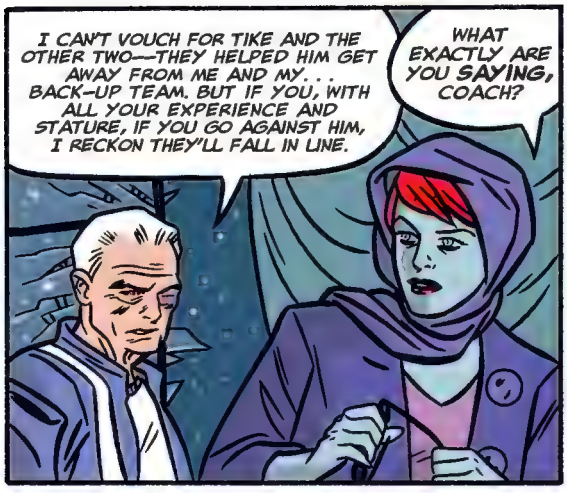

AT FIRST WE THOUGHT HE WAS ONLY A LITTLE BIT FREAKY. WE WERE SAVING UP TO HAVE THOSE THINGS. . .
ANTENNA. . .
THOSE THINGS TAKEN OFF OF HIS HEAD. BUT THEN. . .
YOU TELL THEM, GREG.

BUT THEN HE STARTS TO GET WEIRD. I MEAN REALLY WEIRD. AND NASTY. YOU'VE NEVER SEEN A MORE SPITEFUL CHILD.
I SAY CHILD. BUT I DON'T THINK THAT CREATURE WAS EVER A "CHILD" IN THE NORMAL SENSE OF THE WORD.

WHY HAVE YOU DRAGGED ME AWAY FROM MY THREE-THOUSAND-BUCKS-A-NIGHT ROOM TO WATCH THIS?
WHOSE PARENTS?
THEY'RE HIS PARENTS.
THE ORPHAN'S.
BUT. . . HOW CAN THEY BE GUY'S PARENTS. . . IF HE'S THE ORPHAN?

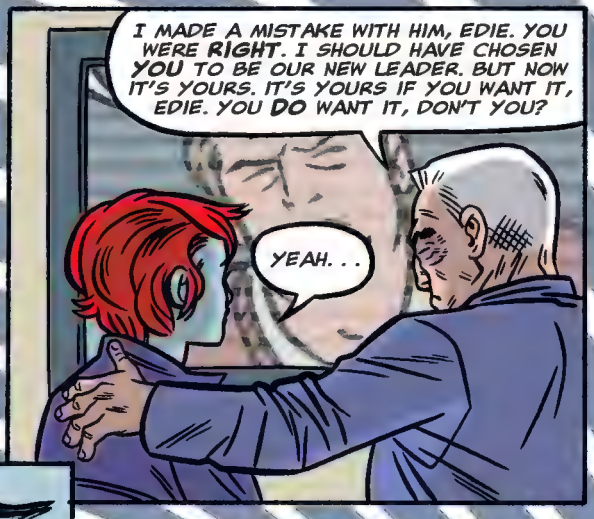
EXACTLY. THEY SPENT SEVEN YEARS IN JAIL FOR GUY'S ATTEMPTED MURDER. POLICE SAY THEY TRIED TO MAKE IT LOOK LIKE GUY DIED IN A FIRE.
BUT THEY'RE WILLING TO TAKE A LIE DETECTOR TEST AND SAY THAT IT WAS GUY WHO STARTED THE FIRE—THAT HE TRIED TO KILL THEM!
. . .

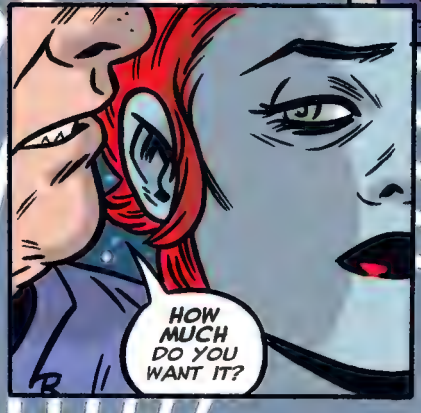
IF WE'RE GOING TO GO AFTER HIM, WE'VE GOT TO ATTACK HIM FROM ALL ANGLES.
IF WE'RE GOING TO GO AFTER HIM. . .?


I CAN'T VOUCH FOR TIKE AND THE OTHER TWO—THEY HELPED HIM GET AWAY FROM ME AND MY... BACK-UP TEAM. BUT IF YOU, WITH ALL YOUR EXPERIENCE AND STATURE, IF YOU GO AGAINST HIM, I RECKON THEY'LL FALL IN LINE.
WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOU SAYING, COACH?

I'M SAYING YOU CAN HAVE IT, EDIE. YOU CAN HAVE WHAT YOU MOST WANT. WHAT YOU WANT MOST IN THE WORLD.
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS GET RID OF GUY SMITH.
"GET RID OF"?

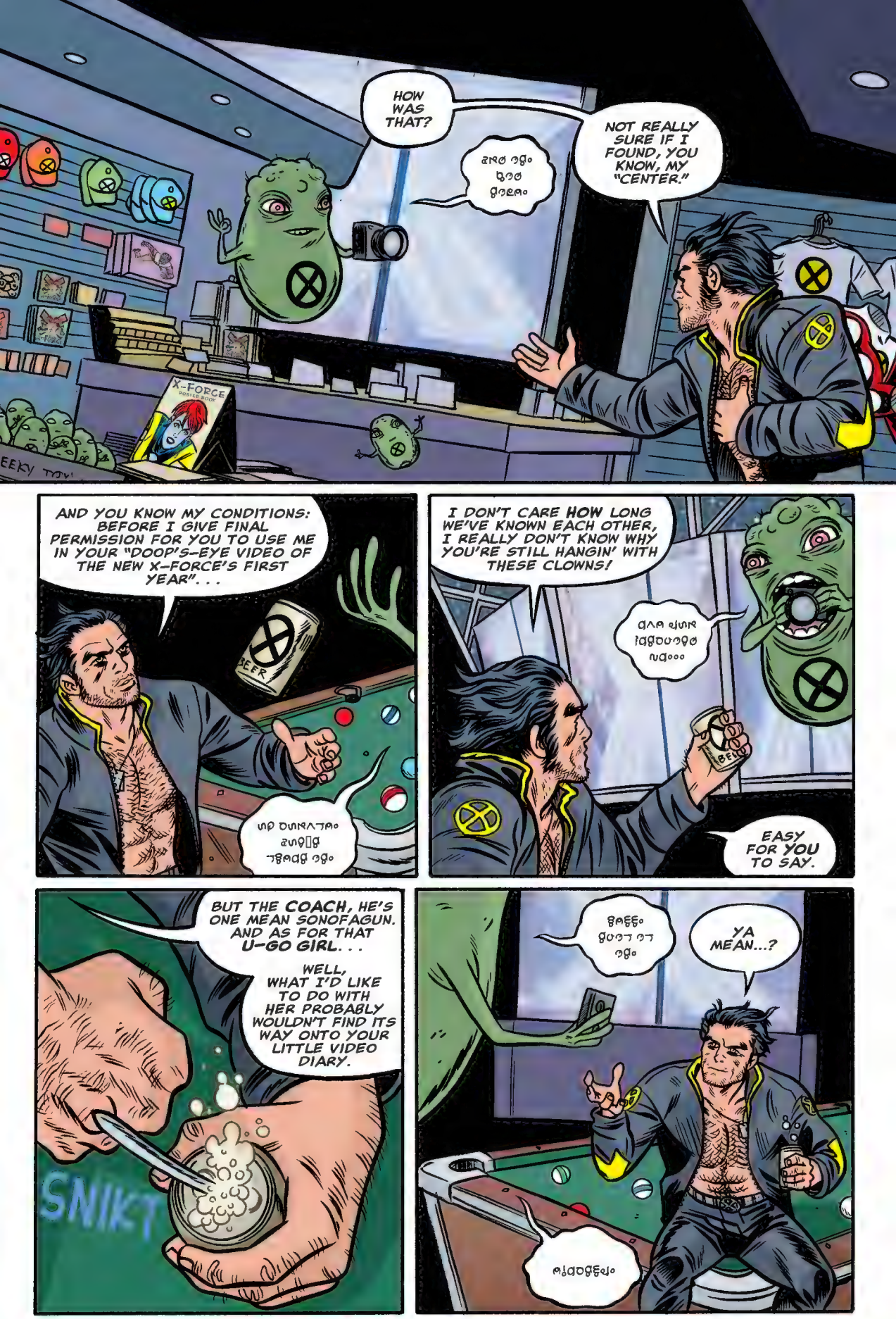
I LEFT MY THESAURUS AT HOME, BUT LET'S SEE:
KILL. DESTROY. SLAUGHTER.
TAKE THE LIFE OF.


I MADE A MISTAKE WITH HIM, EDIE. YOU WERE RIGHT. I SHOULD HAVE CHOSEN YOU TO BE OUR NEW LEADER. BUT NOW IT'S YOURS. IT'S YOURS IF YOU WANT IT, EDIE. YOU DO WANT IT, DON'T YOU?
YEAH...

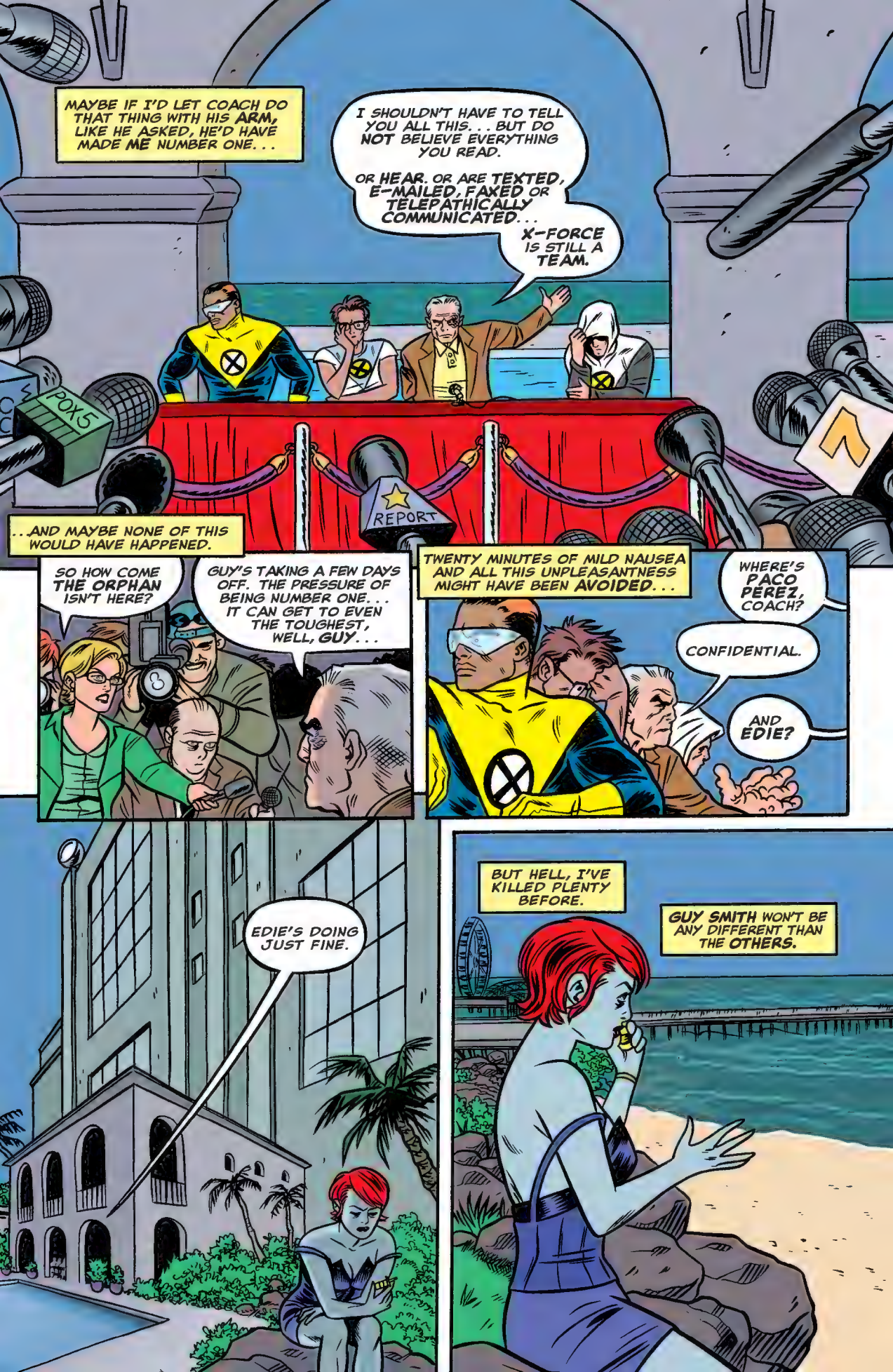

HOW MUCH DO YOU WANT IT?

X-FORCE #120

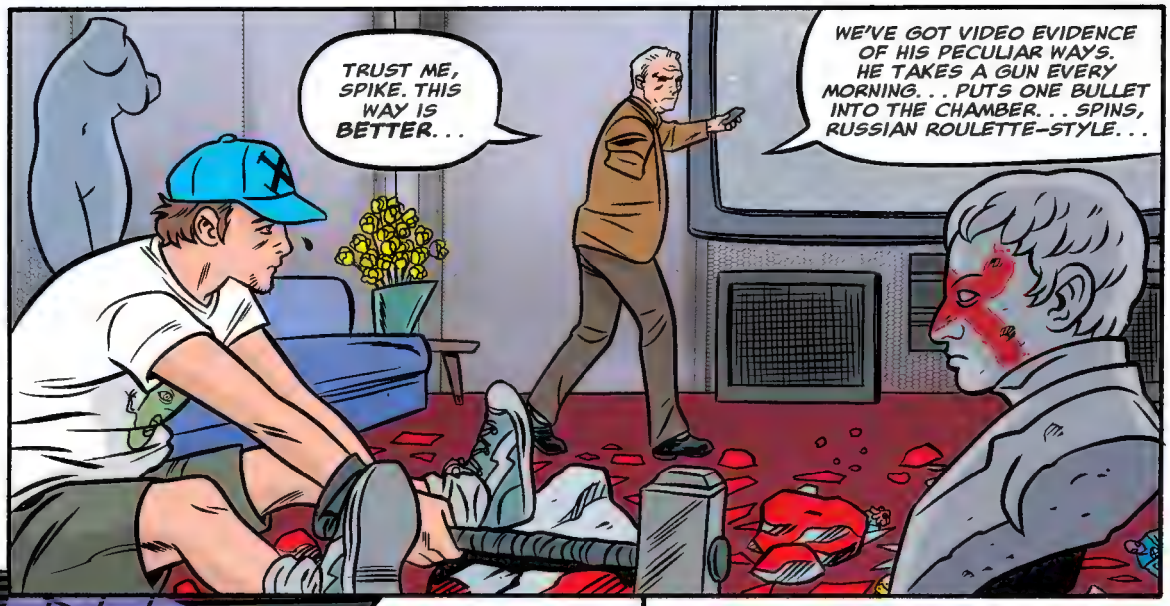
I MEAN, WHEN I FIRST HEARD ABOUT THIS NEW "X-FORCE"... I WASN'T SURE ABOUT 'EM...
BUT NOW I'VE SEEN WHAT THEY'RE ABOUT...
NOW I GOT A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT THEIR MOTIVATION IS...
SHIRT
SHLISH
I'M EVEN LESS SURE ABOUT THEM.
SQEEK

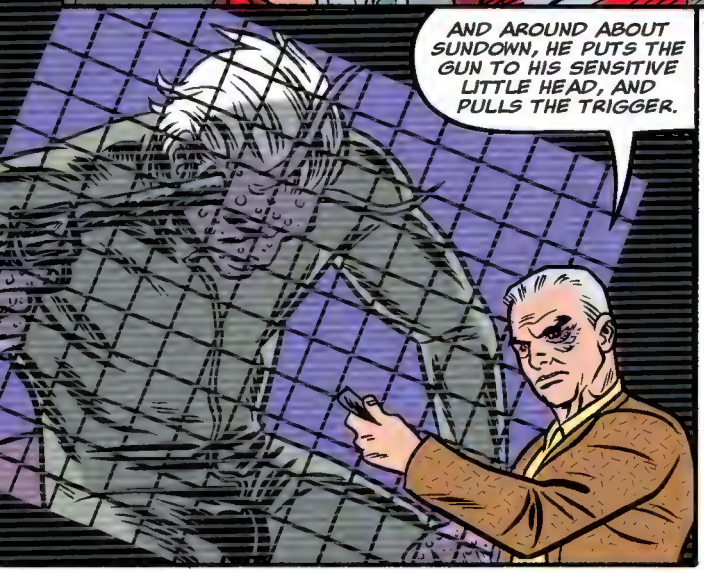

HOW WAS THAT?
NOT REALLY SURE IF I FOUND, YOU KNOW, MY "CENTER."
X-FORCE POSTER BOOK
AND YOU KNOW MY CONDITIONS: BEFORE I GIVE FINAL PERMISSION FOR YOU TO USE ME IN YOUR "DOOP'S-EYE VIDEO OF THE NEW X-FORCE'S FIRST YEAR"...
BEER
I DON'T CARE HOW LONG WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER, I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'RE STILL HANGIN' WITH THESE CLOWNS!
EASY FOR YOU TO SAY.
BUT THE COACH, HE'S ONE MEAN SONOFAGUN. AND AS FOR THAT U-GO GIRL...
WELL, WHAT I'D LIKE TO DO WITH HER PROBABLY WOULDN'T FIND ITS WAY ONTO YOUR LITTLE VIDEO DIARY.
SNIKT
YA MEAN...?

SORRY WE'RE CLOSED
I DON'T KNOW, DOOP. EVEN FOR AN OLD FRIEND, YOU'RE ASKIN' A HELLUVA LOT.
X-FORCE CAFE'
STAN LEE PRESENTS
X-FORCE: SNIKT!
PETER MILLIGAN-WRITER
MICHAEL ALLRED-ARTIST
LAURA ALLRED-COLORIST
DOC ALLRED & BLAMBOT-LETTERS
JOHN MIESEGAES-ASST. EDITOR
AXEL ALONSO-EDITOR
JOE QUESADA-CHIEF
BILL JEMAS-PRESIDENT
AN' I GOT A FEELING THAT THE NEXT FEW DAYS COULD GET KINDA MESSY FOR YOUR NEW CREW.


MAYBE IF I'D LET COACH DO THAT THING WITH HIS ARM, LIKE HE ASKED, HE'D HAVE MADE ME NUMBER ONE...
I SHOULDN'T HAVE TO TELL YOU ALL THIS... BUT DO NOT BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU READ.
OR HEAR. OR ARE TEXTED, E-MAILED, FAXED OR TELEPATHICALLY COMMUNICATED...
X-FORCE IS STILL A TEAM.
POX5
REPORT
...AND MAYBE NONE OF THIS WOULD HAVE HAPPENED.
SO HOW COME THE ORPHAN ISN'T HERE?
GUY'S TAKING A FEW DAYS OFF. THE PRESSURE OF BEING NUMBER ONE... IT CAN GET TO EVEN THE TOUGHEST, WELL, GUY...
TWENTY MINUTES OF MILD NAUSEA AND ALL THIS UNPLEASANTNESS MIGHT HAVE BEEN AVOIDED...
WHERE'S PACO PEREZ, COACH?
CONFIDENTIAL.
AND EDIE?
EDIE'S DOING JUST FINE.
BUT HELL, I'VE KILLED PLENTY BEFORE.
GUY SMITH WON'T BE ANY DIFFERENT THAN THE OTHERS.

I WANT A WAR!
SMASH
BLOOD. GORE. TREACHERY. TRAGEDY. ONE HALF OF X-FORCE PITTED AGAINST THE OTHER. THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR PLAYED OUT IN THE RAREFIED ATMOSPHERE OF HIGH-PROFILE MUTANTS.
I THOUGHT I'D MADE MYSELF CLEAR!
YOU DID MAKE YOURSELF CLEAR, SIR, BUT...
I HAVE FOUR OF MY THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLD WUNDERKINDS WORKING ON THE VIDEO GAME: DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MUCH MONEY I'VE SUNK INTO THIS PROJECT?
CRYSTAL PRINT
I'LL ONLY GET A RETURN ON MY INVESTMENT IF WE HAVE A REAL-LIFE WAR THAT I CAN HANG THE GAMES ON. I NEED SOMETHING TO SPIN OFF!
YOU PROMISED ME INTERNECINE BLOODLETTING, COACH. WHERE IS IT?
THAT'LL COME. I PROMISE. WE CAN HAVE A WAR. BUT NOW IS NOT THE TIME.
I'VE HAD OUR BEST PEOPLE LOOKING INTO THIS AND THE ORPHAN IS VERY POPULAR WITH THE CIVILIANS. IF WE HAD A WAR... AND THE ORPHAN LOST... THE PUBLIC WOULD RESENT THE NEW X-FORCE...

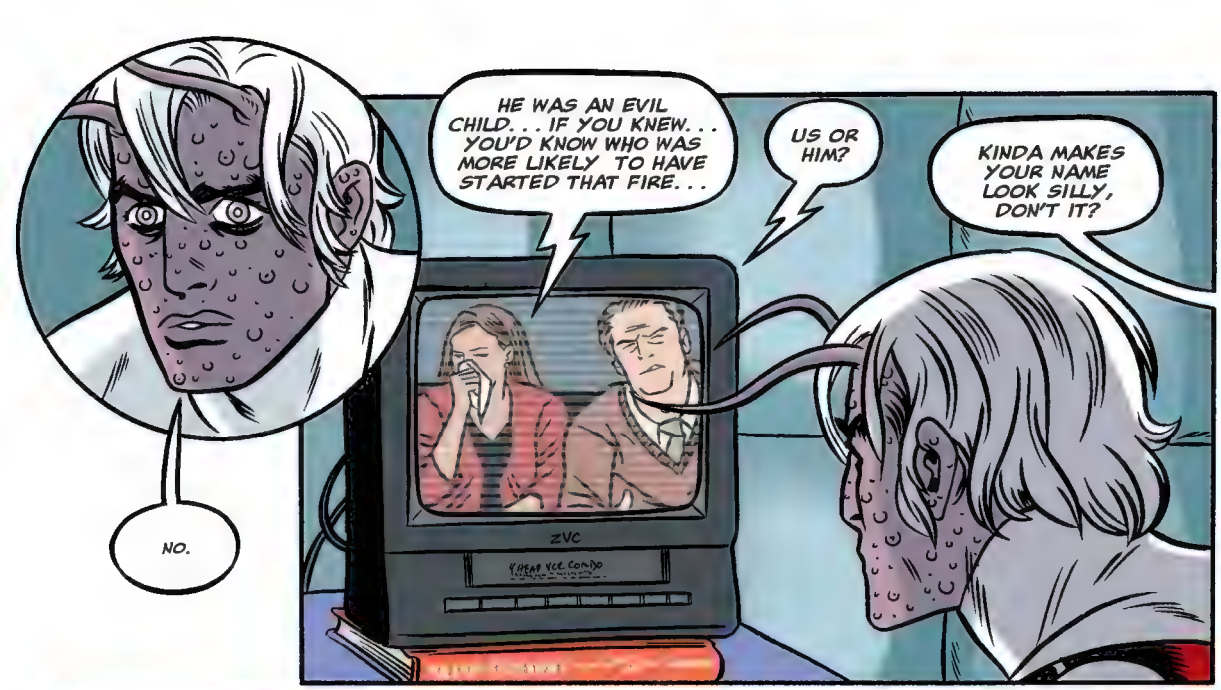

TRUST ME, SPIKE. THIS WAY IS BETTER...
WE'VE GOT VIDEO EVIDENCE OF HIS PECULIAR WAYS. HE TAKES A GUN EVERY MORNING... PUTS ONE BULLET INTO THE CHAMBER... SPINS, RUSSIAN ROULETTE-STYLE...

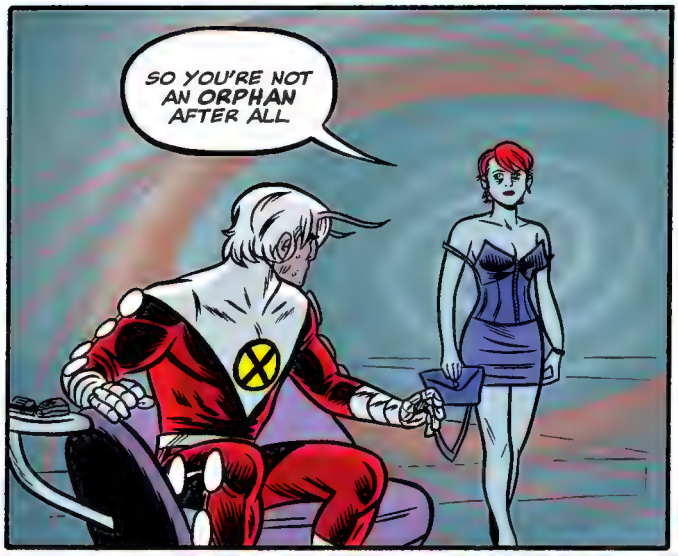

AND AROUND ABOUT SUNDOWN, HE PUTS THE GUN TO HIS SENSITIVE LITTLE HEAD, AND PULLS THE TRIGGER.

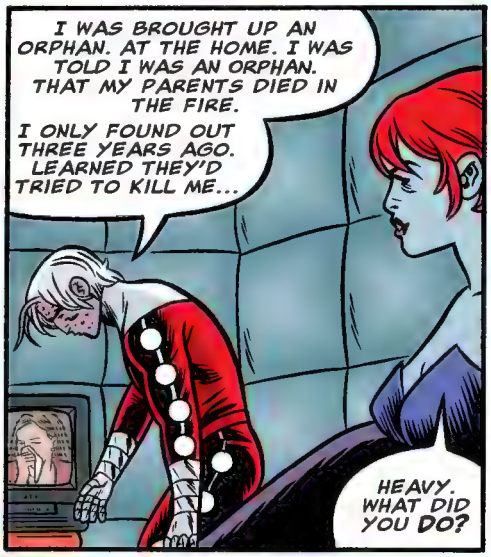
EVERY DAY?
EACH AND EVERY.
WOW. WE LIKE THIS GUY.

WE DON'T LIKE HIM, SPIKE. WE WANNA GET RID OF HIM. AND WE'RE GOING TO USE THIS INFORMATION TO DO IT.
I'VE ALREADY PLANTED THE IDEA THAT HE'S UNDER STRESS. AND RIGHT ABOUT NOW...

...THE NATION IS GOING TO SEE THE VERY THING THAT WILL PUSH GUY SMITH OVER THE EDGE...


HE WAS AN EVIL CHILD. . . IF YOU KNEW. . . YOU'D KNOW WHO WAS MORE LIKELY TO HAVE STARTED THAT FIRE. . .
US OR HIM?
KINDA MAKES YOUR NAME LOOK SILLY, DON'T IT?
NO.
ZVC


SO YOU'RE NOT AN ORPHAN AFTER ALL


I WAS BROUGHT UP AN ORPHAN. AT THE HOME. I WAS TOLD I WAS AN ORPHAN. THAT MY PARENTS DIED IN THE FIRE.
I ONLY FOUND OUT THREE YEARS AGO. LEARNED THEY'D TRIED TO KILL ME...
HEAVY. WHAT DID YOU DO?

KERSH

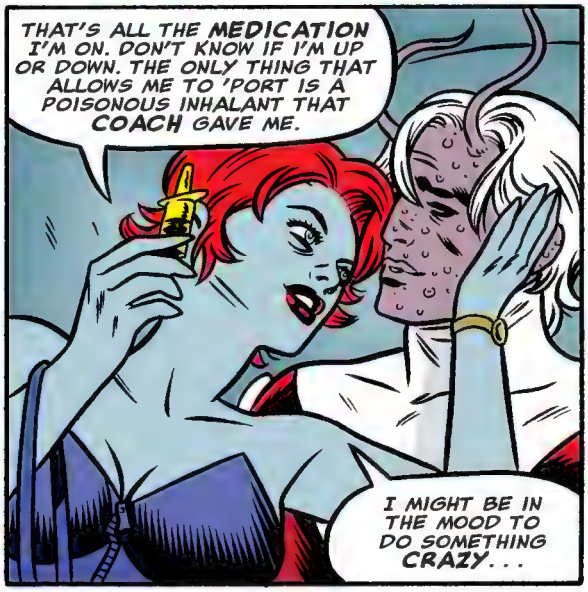
I WENT HOME, POINTED A REVOLVER AT MY HEAD. . .
AND PULLED THE TRIGGER.

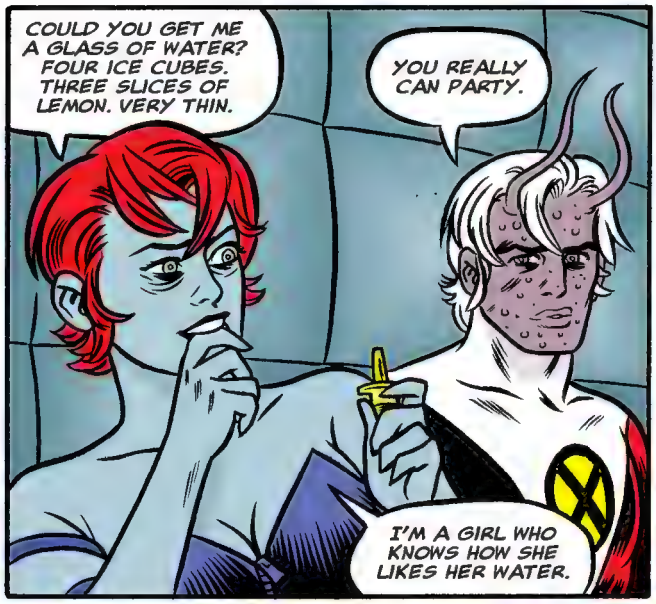
BUT I GOT LUCKY. THERE WAS ONLY ONE BULLET CHAMBERED.
I'VE BEEN GETTING LUCKY EVER SINCE.

EDIE, WHY ARE YOU HERE?
MAYBE FOR THIS.

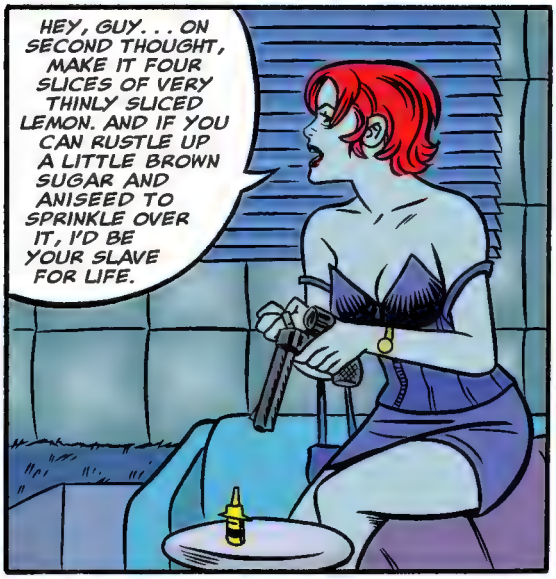
WHY. . . WHY DID YOU DO THAT?
I WANTED TO KNOW HOW IT FELT.
AND. . . AND HOW DID IT FEEL?

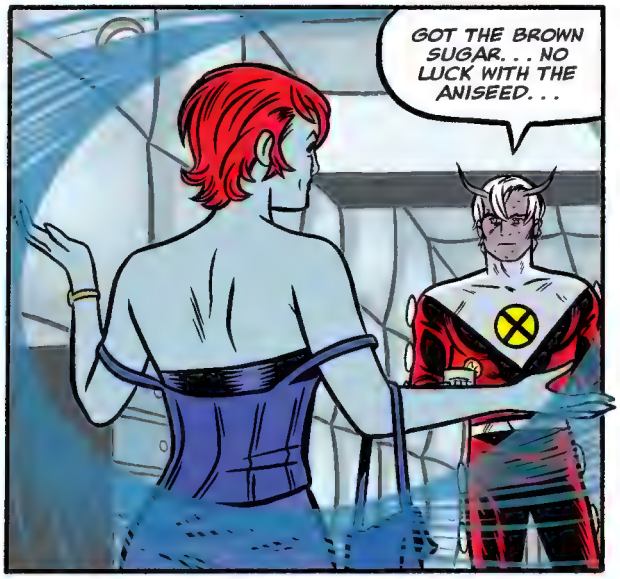
YOU'RE THE ONE WITH THE HEIGHTENED SENSES. YOU TELL ME.
MY HEAD'S SPINNING. . . MY HEART'S THUMPING. . . I CAN'T REALLY SAY.
THOUGH YOU SEEM. . . ON EDGE.


THAT'S ALL THE MEDICATION I'M ON. DON'T KNOW IF I'M UP OR DOWN. THE ONLY THING THAT ALLOWS ME TO 'PORT IS A POISONOUS INHALANT THAT COACH GAVE ME.
I MIGHT BE IN THE MOOD TO DO SOMETHING CRAZY. . .


COULD YOU GET ME A GLASS OF WATER? FOUR ICE CUBES. THREE SLICES OF LEMON. VERY THIN.
YOU REALLY CAN PARTY.
I'M A GIRL WHO KNOWS HOW SHE LIKES HER WATER.

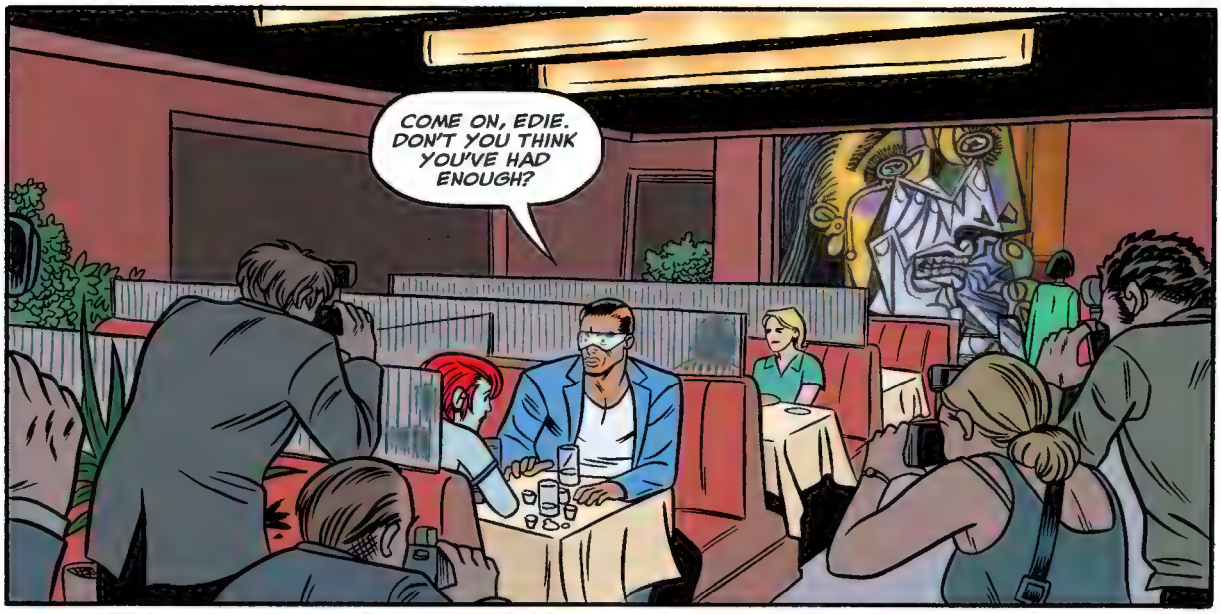
AND IT'LL GIVE ME ENOUGH TIME TO DO THIS...


HEY, GUY... ON SECOND THOUGHT, MAKE IT FOUR SLICES OF VERY THINLY SLICED LEMON. AND IF YOU CAN RUSTLE UP A LITTLE BROWN SUGAR AND ANISEED TO SPRINKLE OVER IT, I'D BE YOUR SLAVE FOR LIFE.


GOT THE BROWN SUGAR... NO LUCK WITH THE ANISEED...

KNOW WHAT? JUST REMEMBERED... I SHOULD BE GETTING BACK TO THE CLINIC... GOT MORE MEDICINE TO TAKE...
THANKS FOR THE KISS, GUY.

MY PLEASURE.

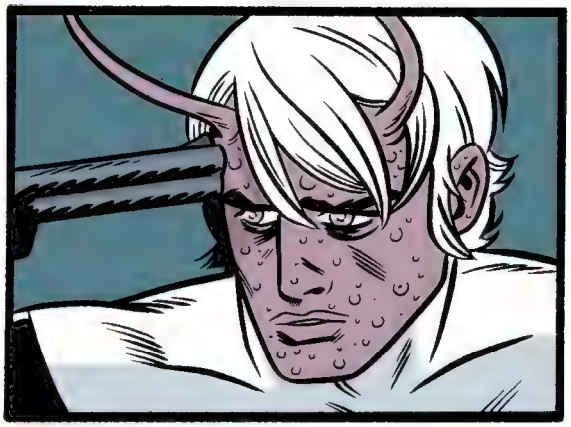

COME ON, EDIE. DON'T YOU THINK YOU'VE HAD ENOUGH?

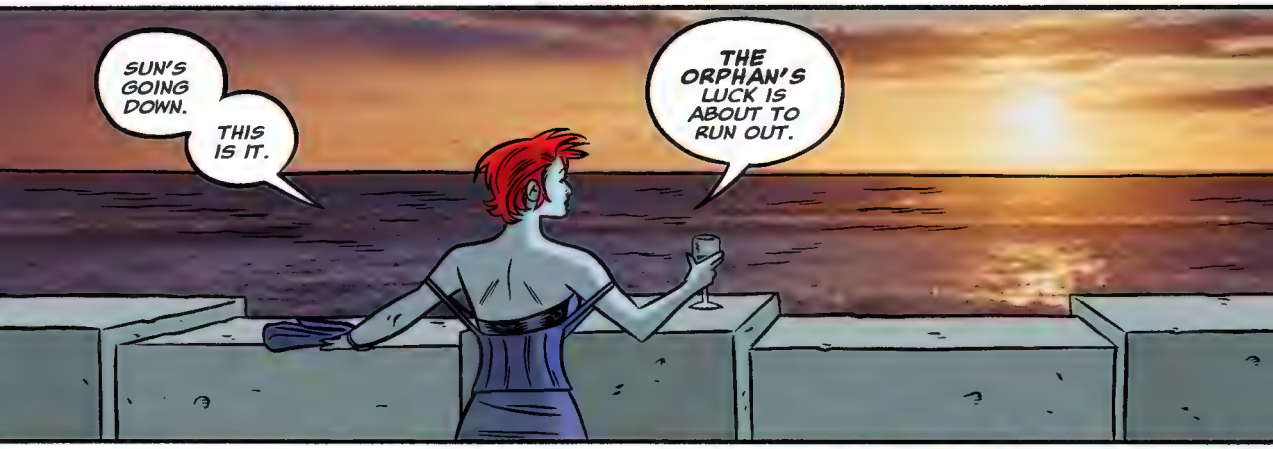
ENOUGH? ENOUGH? JEEZ, TIKE, WHAT KIND OF LANGUAGE IS THAT FOR SOMEONE WHO CALLS HIMSELF THE ANARCHIST?
MAYBE WE SHOULD CHANGE YOUR NAME TO "THE PACIFIST"?
WHERE'RE YOU GOIN'?

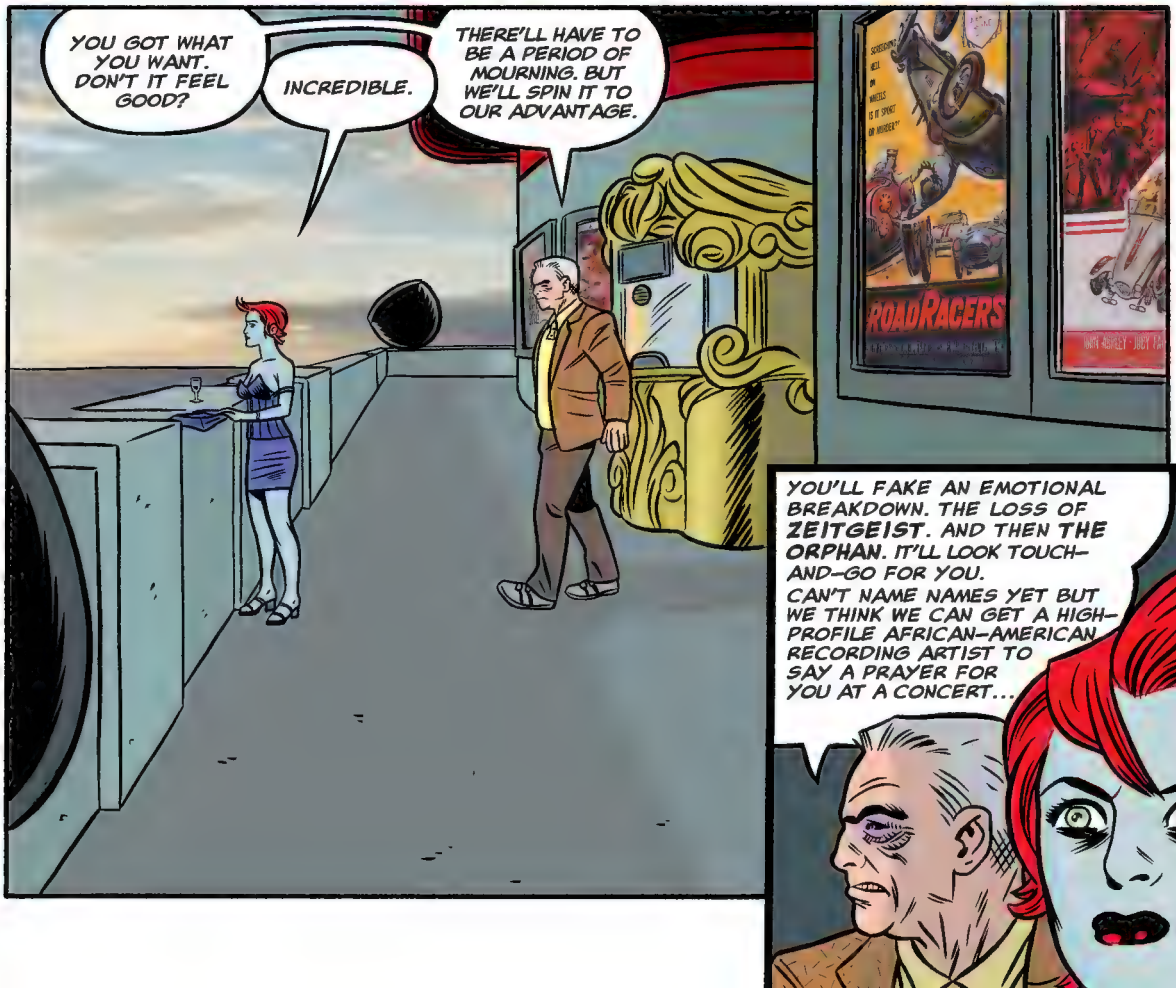
GONNA TRY TO FIND SOMEONE I CAN GET INTO TROUBLE WITH. I THOUGHT THAT PERSON WAS YOU... BUT I WAS BADLY MISHAKEN.
I MEAN, SADLY MISTAKEN.
HEY, EDIE. BACK ON THE SAUCE, HUH?

GET THAT DAMN THING OUTTA MY FACE!

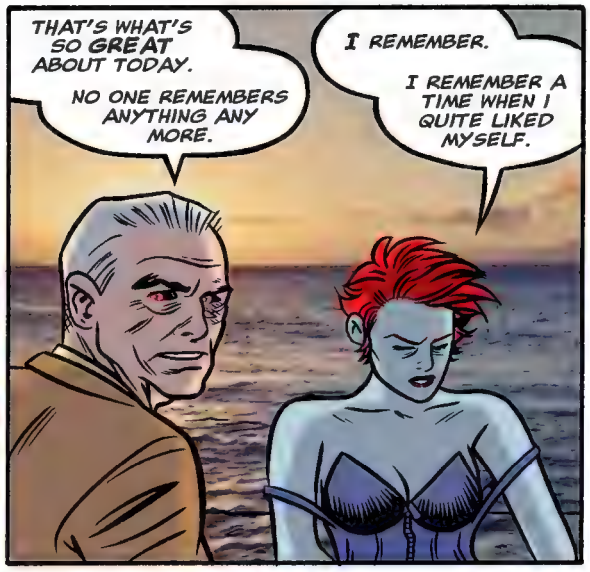
SPOILED LITTLE BRAT! WITHOUT US STICKING OUR CAMERAS INTO YOUR FACES YOU'D ALL BE NOTHING BUT A BUNCH OF LOUSY MUTANT FREAKS!




SUN'S GOING DOWN.
THIS IS IT.
THE ORPHAN'S LUCK IS ABOUT TO RUN OUT.

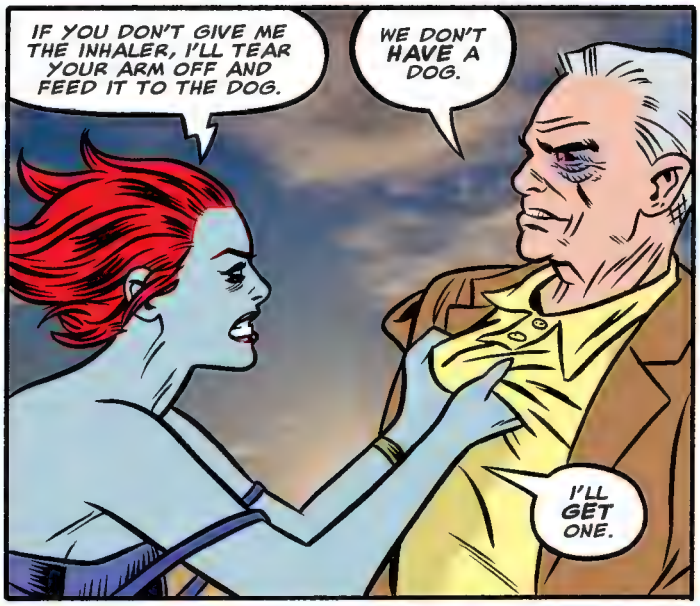

YOU GOT WHAT YOU WANT. DON'T IT FEEL GOOD?
INCREDIBLE.
THERE'LL HAVE TO BE A PERIOD OF MOURNING. BUT WE'LL SPIN IT TO OUR ADVANTAGE.
ROADRACERS
YOU'LL FAKE AN EMOTIONAL BREAKDOWN. THE LOSS OF ZEITGEIST. AND THEN THE ORPHAN. IT'LL LOOK TOUCH-AND-GO FOR YOU.
CAN'T NAME NAMES YET BUT WE THINK WE CAN GET A HIGH-PROFILE AFRICAN-AMERICAN RECORDING ARTIST TO SAY A PRAYER FOR YOU AT A CONCERT...

THEN YOU PULL THROUGH. A PHOENIX, RISING FROM THE ASHES. YOU OWE IT TO GUY. "YOU OWE IT TO AXEL. YOU OWE IT TO EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES IN X-FORCE"... THAT SORT OF THING.
AND AFTER A FEW DAYS EVERYONE—EXCEPT A FEW FREAKS WHO REALLY OBSESS ABOUT THIS KINDA STUFF—WILL FORGET ALL ABOUT GUY SMITH.

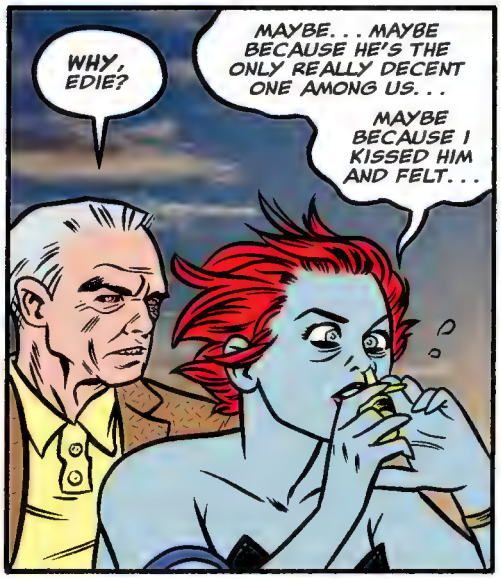

THAT'S WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT TODAY.
NO ONE REMEMBERS ANYTHING ANY MORE.
I REMEMBER.
I REMEMBER A TIME WHEN I QUITE LIKED MYSELF.

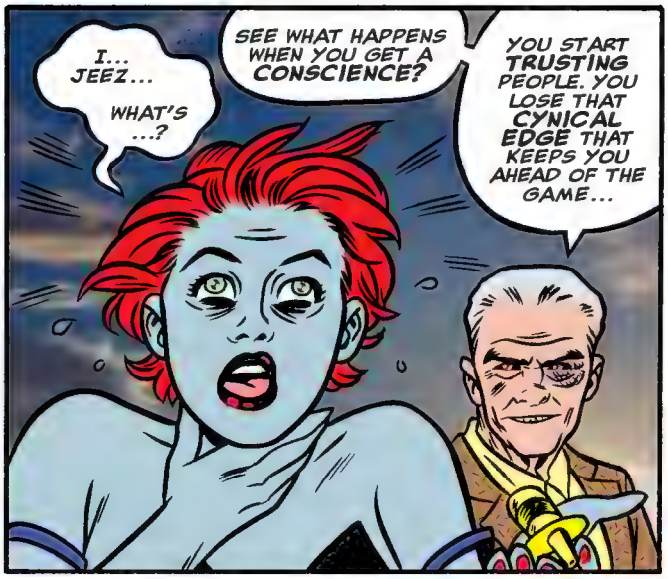
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
LOOKING FOR THAT STUFF YOU GAVE ME, THAT INHALER THAT KEEPS ME ENERGIZED ENOUGH TO 'PORT.
MAYBE YOU SHOULD LAY OFF IT FOR A WHILE.

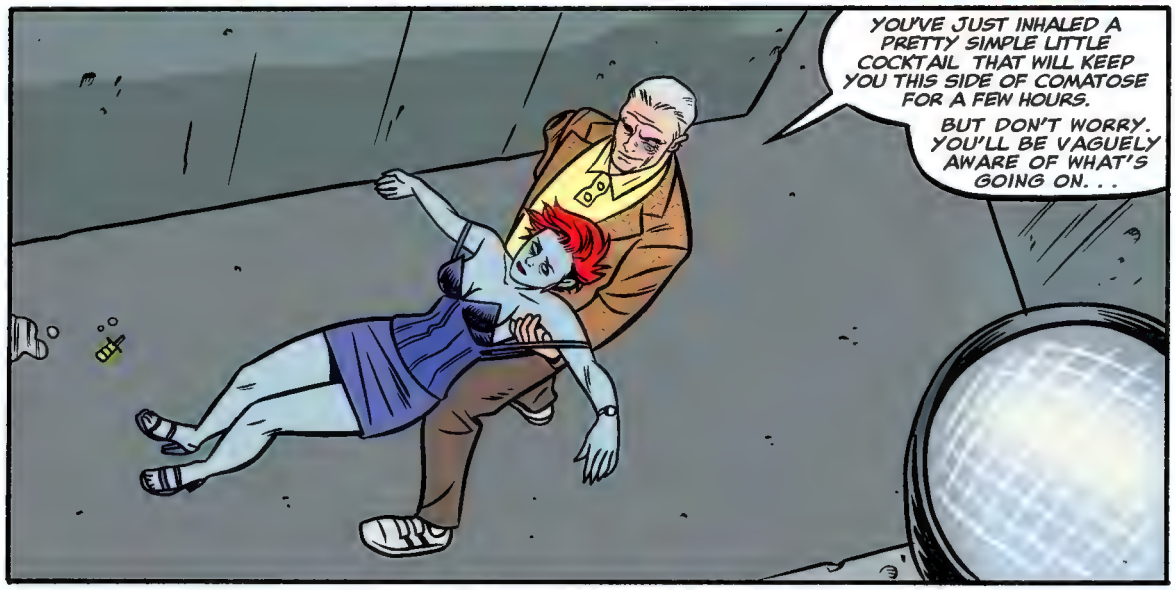
WHERE IS IT, COACH?
EDIE, YOU WANT TO GO AND SAVE HIM, DON'T YOU?
WHERE THE HELL IS IT?!
IT'S TOO LATE TO GROW A CONSCIENCE.
WE'RE MUTANTS, EDIE. WE CAN'T AFFORD THAT KIND OF THING.


IF YOU DON'T GIVE ME THE INHALER, I'LL TEAR YOUR ARM OFF AND FEED IT TO THE DOG.
WE DON'T HAVE A DOG.
I'LL GET ONE.

OKAY...HAVE IT... RUIN YOUR HEALTH...BLOW YOUR BIG CHANCE.
GO AND SAVE YOUR POOR SENSITIVE BOY...


WHY, EDIE?
MAYBE. . . MAYBE BECAUSE HE'S THE ONLY REALLY DECENT ONE AMONG US. . .
MAYBE BECAUSE I KISSED HIM AND FELT. . .


I... JEEZ...
WHAT'S ...?
SEE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU GET A CONSCIENCE?
YOU START TRUSTING PEOPLE. YOU LOSE THAT CYNICAL EDGE THAT KEEPS YOU AHEAD OF THE GAME...

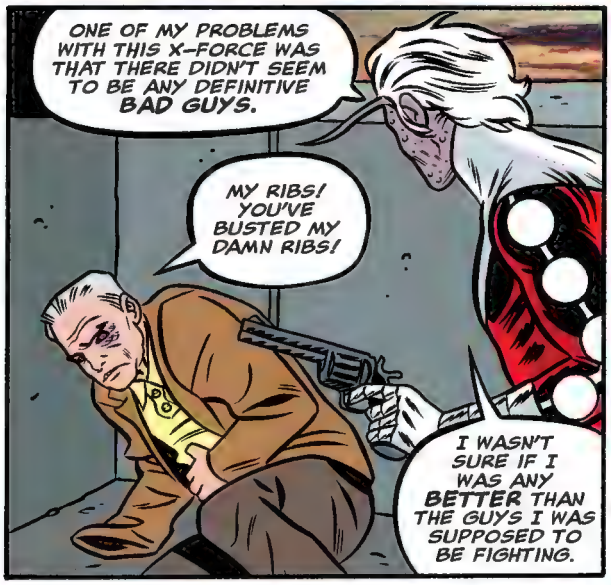

YOU'VE JUST INHALED A PRETTY SIMPLE LITTLE COCKTAIL THAT WILL KEEP YOU THIS SIDE OF COMATOSE FOR A FEW HOURS.
BUT DON'T WORRY. YOU'LL BE VAGUELY AWARE OF WHAT'S GOING ON. . .

YOU JUST WON'T BE ABLE TO DO. . .

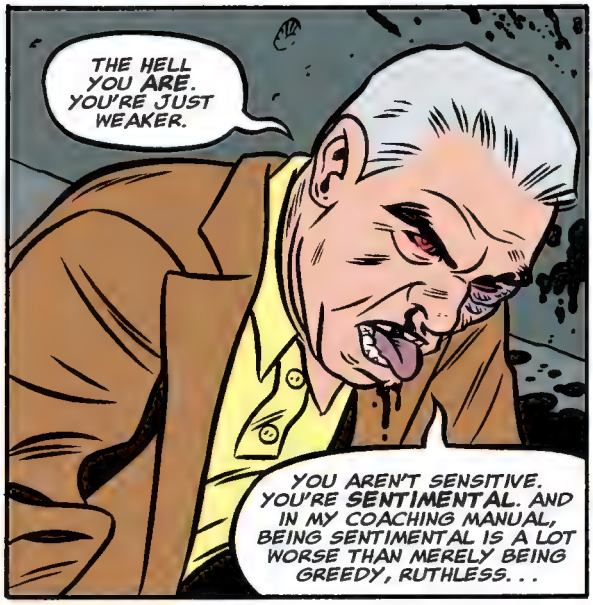
. . .ANYTHING ABOUT IT.

YOU'VE BEEN A GREAT HELP, COACH.

UGHHH!


ONE OF MY PROBLEMS WITH THIS X-FORCE WAS THAT THERE DIDN'T SEEM TO BE ANY DEFINITIVE BAD GUYS.
MY RIBS! YOU'VE BUSTED MY DAMN RIBS!
I WASN'T SURE IF I WAS ANY BETTER THAN THE GUYS I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE FIGHTING.

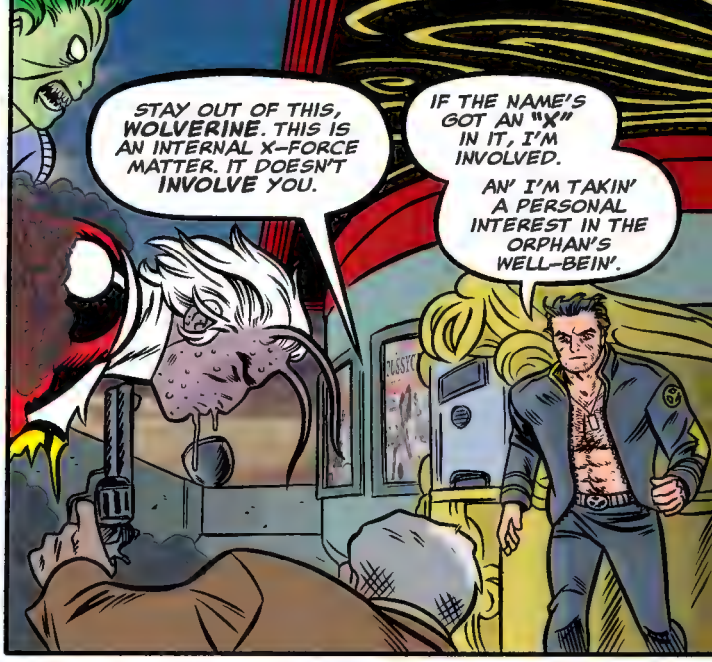
NOW I KNOW THAT I AM.
KRAK

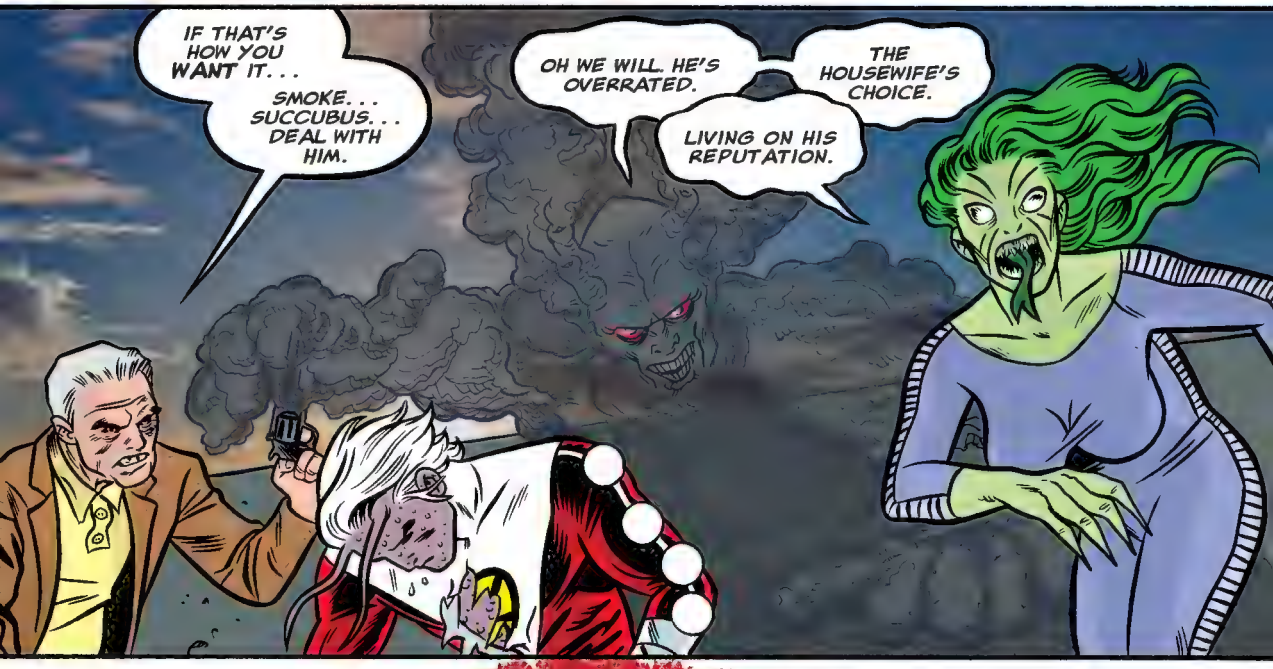

THE HELL YOU ARE. YOU'RE JUST WEAKER.
YOU AREN'T SENSITIVE. YOU'RE SENTIMENTAL. AND IN MY COACHING MANUAL, BEING SENTIMENTAL IS A LOT WORSE THAN MERELY BEING GREEDY, RUTHLESS. . .

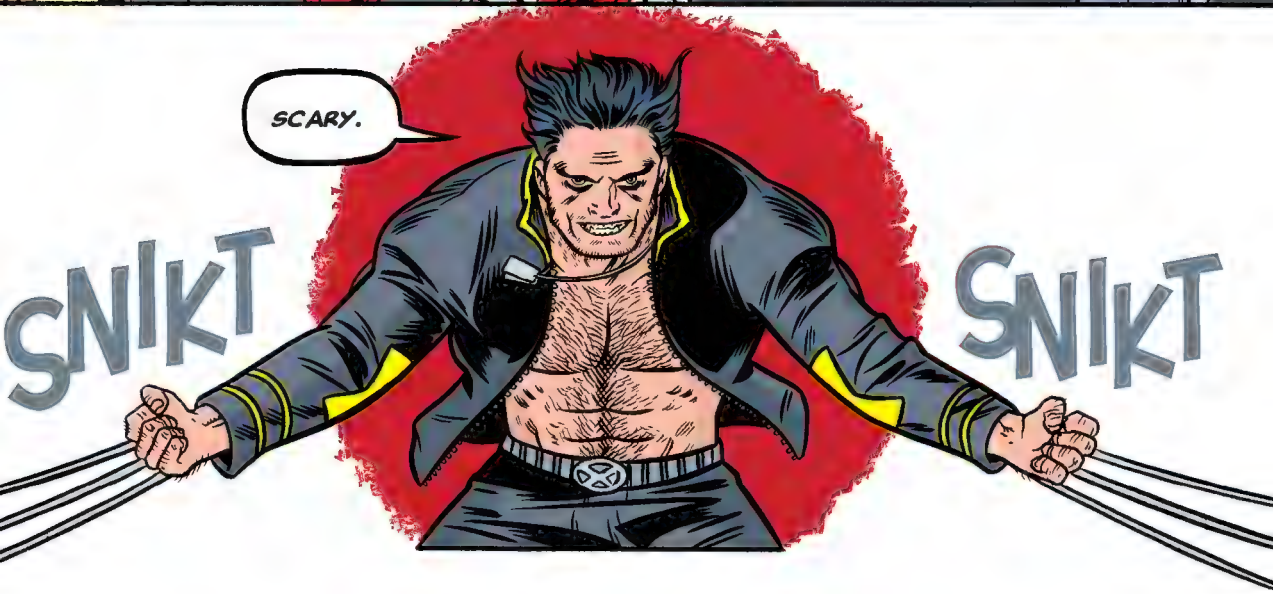
. . .AND WELL PREPARED.

THAT'S RIGHT, LET'S GET NASTY.
LET'S SEE HOW HE CAN HANDLE HIMSELF WITHOUT ANY HELP FROM HIS COSTUME.
AIGHHH!!
IF YOU ASK ME, A VERY LOW PAIN THRESHOLD.
SEE THE KIND OF MAN YOU WERE GOING TO GIVE IT UP FOR? DO YOU SEE THE PATHETIC CREATURE YOU WANTED TO SAVE?
SHE... SHE WANTED TO... TO SAVE ME?
G... GUY...
SORRY...
AND NOW YOU'RE BOTH GOING TO HAVE TO DIE. GUY BLOWS HIS BRAINS OUT. EDIE WILL TAKE A MASSIVE DRUG OVERDOSE.
BOTH TRAGIC DEATHS AN INDICTMENT OF THE TERRIBLE PRICE SOCIETY ASKS OF ITS HEROES.

I GOT AN IDEA.
LET'S EVEN THINGS UP A LITTLE.

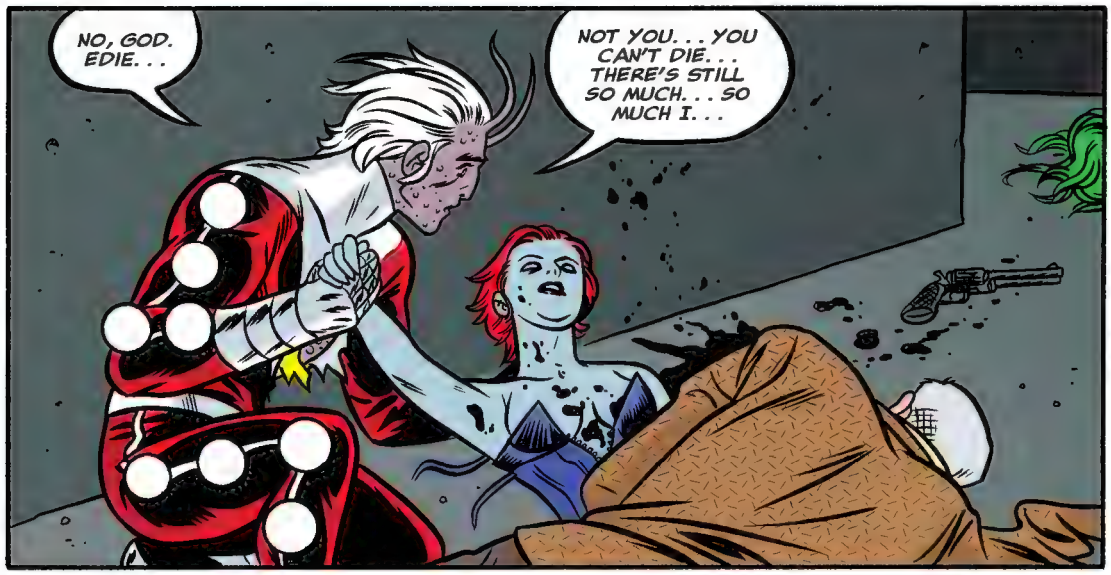

STAY OUT OF THIS, WOLVERINE. THIS IS AN INTERNAL X-FORCE MATTER. IT DOESN'T INVOLVE YOU.
IF THE NAME'S GOT AN "X" IN IT, I'M INVOLVED.
AN' I'M TAKIN' A PERSONAL INTEREST IN THE ORPHAN'S WELL-BEIN'.


IF THAT'S HOW YOU WANT IT...
SMOKE... SUCCUBUS... DEAL WITH HIM.
OH WE WILL. HE'S OVERRATED.
THE HOUSEWIFE'S CHOICE.
LIVING ON HIS REPUTATION.

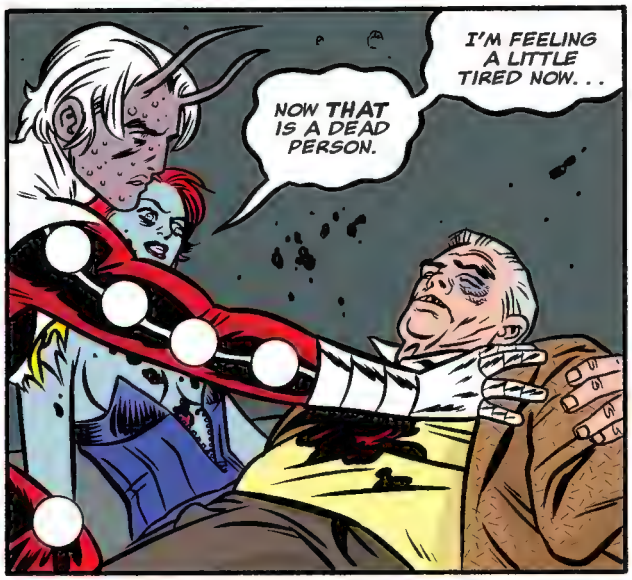

SCARY.
SNIKT
SNIKT

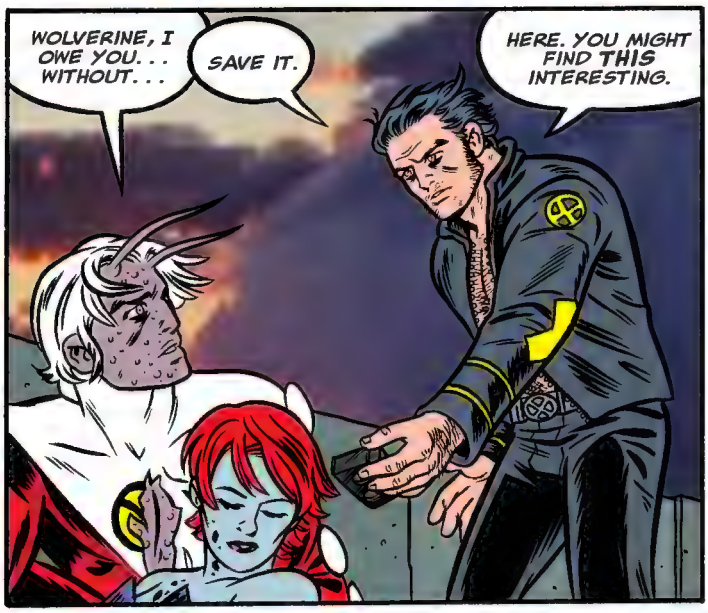
SINCE WHEN DOES WOLVERINE GIVE A DAMN ABOUT MY WELL-BEING?
DON'T GET THE IDEA THIS—HKK! HKK!—MEANS I LIKE YOU... OR YOUR CREW...
I'M JUST DOIN' THIS AS A FAVOR. FOR AN OLD BUDDY.
GIVE ME THAT!
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE IN A COMA!
I'VE GOT A VERY HIGH TOLERANCE.
AND WHO IS THIS GUARDIAN ANGEL?
JUST SOMEONE WHO'S WATCHING OUT FOR YA...
DON'T GET ALL COY, WOLVERINE. I WANT TO KNOW WHO!

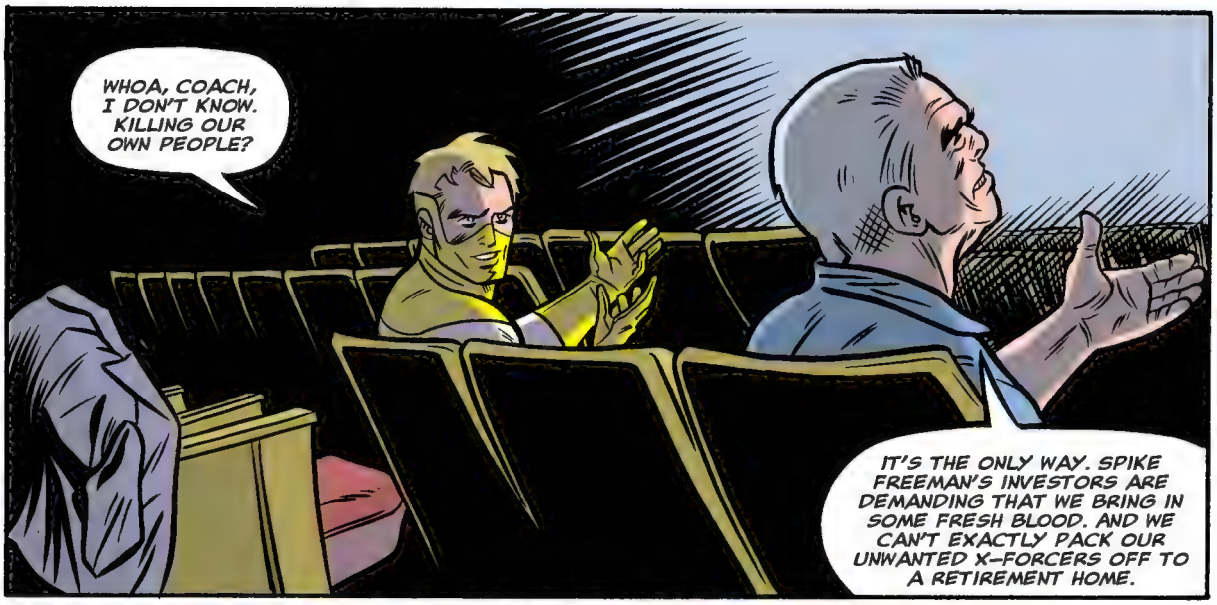
AN' I DON'T GIVE A SNOT WHAT YOU WANT.
I'M SAVIN' YOUR BUTT HERE.
SOME PEOPLE JUS' DON'T KNOW HOW TO BE GRATEFUL.
DON'T GET ME WRONG. I'M GRATEFUL.
I JUST NEVER HAD ANYONE WATCH OVER ME BEFORE.
BLAM BLAM
EDIE!


NO, GOD. EDIE...
NOT YOU...YOU CAN'T DIE... THERE'S STILL SO MUCH...SO MUCH I...

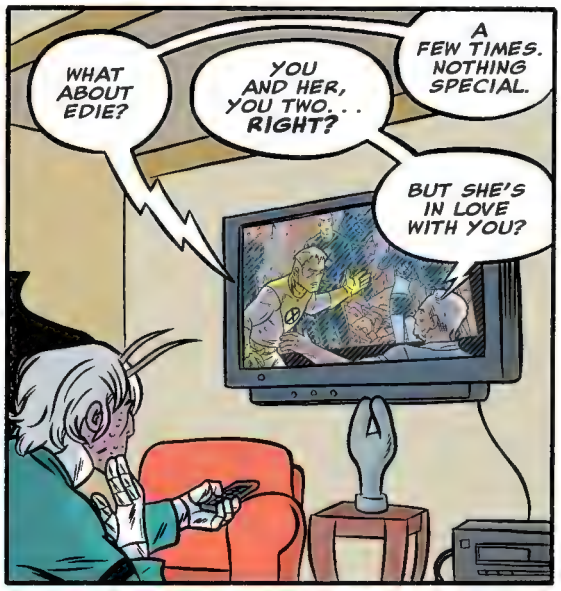
THE BLOOD IS HIS, NOT MINE, YOU IDIOT.
NEXT TIME YOU START BLUBBERING OVER ME, CAN YOU MAKE SURE I'M ACTUALLY DEAD FIRST?

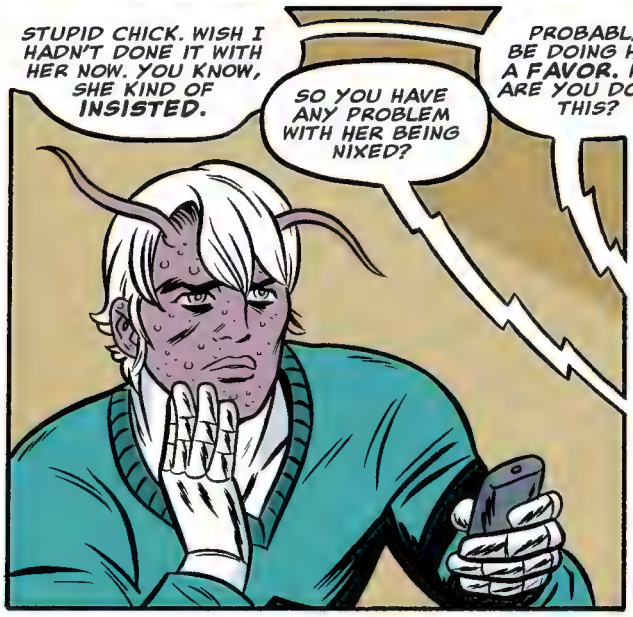

NOW THAT IS A DEAD PERSON.
I'M FEELING A LITTLE TIRED NOW...


WOLVERINE, I OWE YOU... WITHOUT...
SAVE IT.
HERE. YOU MIGHT FIND THIS INTERESTING.


WHOA, COACH, I DON'T KNOW. KILLING OUR OWN PEOPLE?
IT'S THE ONLY WAY. SPIKE FREEMAN'S INVESTORS ARE DEMANDING THAT WE BRING IN SOME FRESH BLOOD. AND WE CAN'T EXACTLY PACK OUR UNWANTED X-FORCERS OFF TO A RETIREMENT HOME.

WHO'S GOING TO BE LEFT?
YOU, OF COURSE. TIKE ALICAR.
THAT CLOWN? IF ANYONE'S GOTTA GO, IT'S HIM.
NO CAN DO.

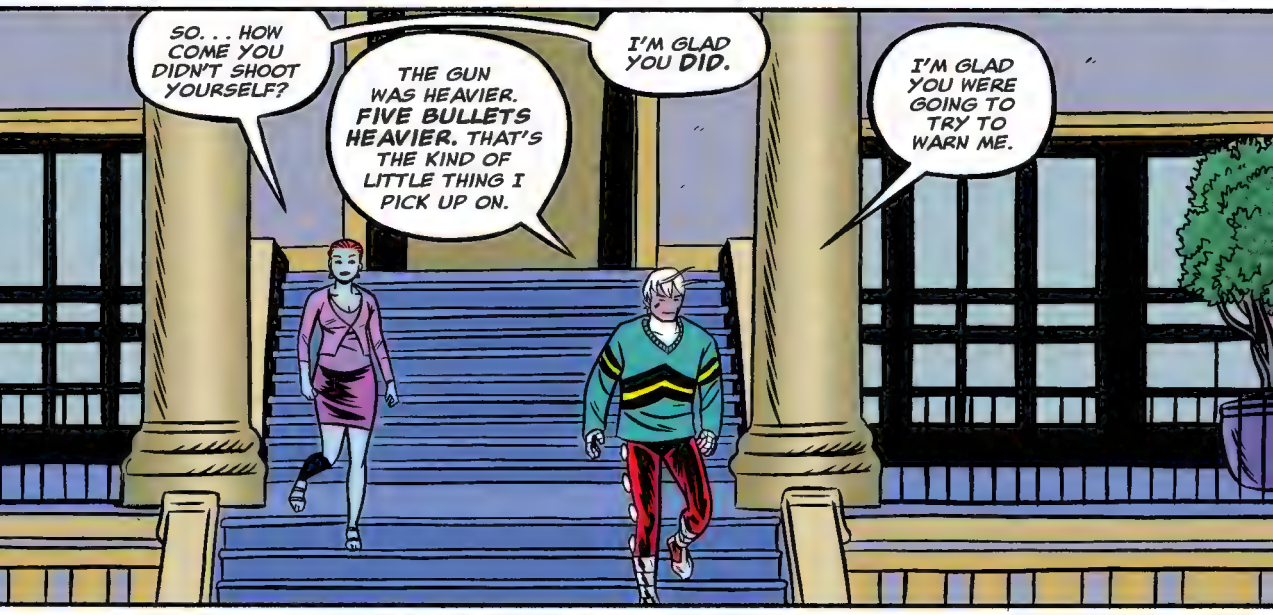

WHAT ABOUT EDIE?
YOU AND HER, YOU TWO. . . RIGHT?
A FEW TIMES. NOTHING SPECIAL.
BUT SHE'S IN LOVE WITH YOU?


STUPID CHICK. WISH I HADN'T DONE IT WITH HER NOW. YOU KNOW, SHE KIND OF INSISTED.
SO YOU HAVE ANY PROBLEM WITH HER BEING NIXED?
PROBABLY BE DOING HER A FAVOR. HOW ARE YOU DOING THIS?

THERE'S A BAND. THEY'RE CALLED "BOYZ R US."

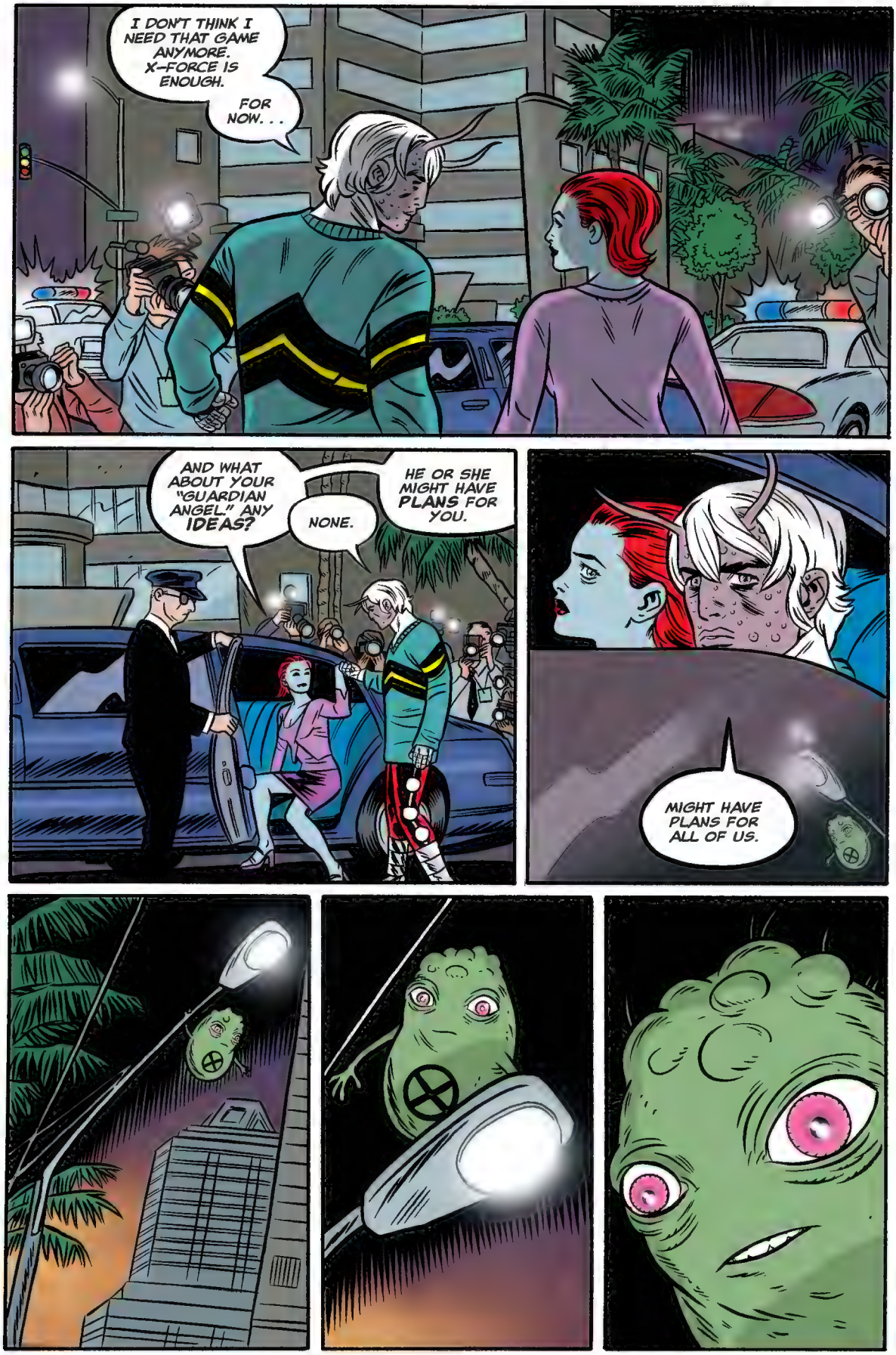
WHAT'S THE VIDEO?
IT'S...

...IT'S JUST GARBAGE.
C'MON, LET'S GET SOMETHING TO EAT.


SO... HOW COME YOU DIDN'T SHOOT YOURSELF?
THE GUN WAS HEAVIER. FIVE BULLETS HEAVIER. THAT'S THE KIND OF LITTLE THING I PICK UP ON.
I'M GLAD YOU DID.
I'M GLAD YOU WERE GOING TO TRY TO WARN ME.

HEY—ALL THIS BACKSLAPPING DOESN'T MEAN I STILL DON'T THINK I'M BETTER EQUIPPED THAN YOU TO BE NUMBER ONE.
NEVER THOUGHT IT WOULD.

REMEMBER TO CHECK THAT THERE'S ONLY ONE BULLET IN YOUR GUN WHEN YOU PULL THE TRIGGER TOMORROW.
I DON'T THINK I'LL BE DOING THAT TOMORROW.

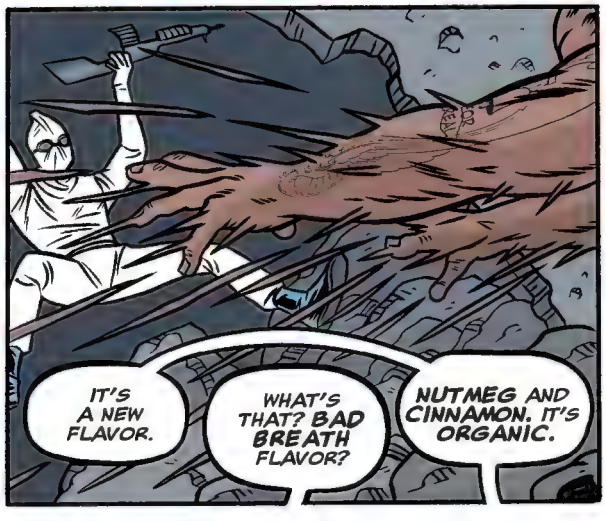

I DON'T THINK I NEED THAT GAME ANYMORE. X-FORCE IS ENOUGH.
FOR NOW. . .
AND WHAT ABOUT YOUR "GUARDIAN ANGEL." ANY IDEAS?
NONE.
HE OR SHE MIGHT HAVE PLANS FOR YOU.
MIGHT HAVE PLANS FOR ALL OF US.

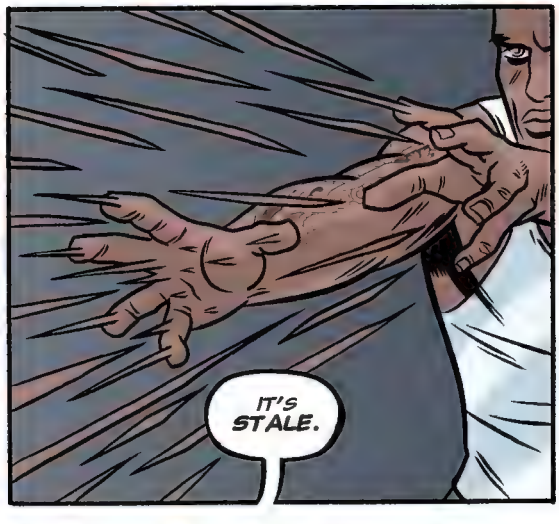
X-FORCE #121

ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER MUTANT.
ANOTHER ROOKIE'S SHOW-REEL.

THIS GUY'S PRETTY COOL. WHAT'S HIS NAME?
SPIKE. HIS BODY CREATES THESE SPIKEY THINGS THAT HE CAN HURL AROUND AND CONTROL AND STUFF.
WHAT DO YOU THINK, TIKE?

WHAT DO I THINK?
IS IT ME, OR IS THIS POPCORN STALE?


IT'S A NEW FLAVOR.
WHAT'S THAT? BAD BREATH FLAVOR?
NUTMEG AND CINNAMON. IT'S ORGANIC.


IT'S STALE.

STAN LEE PRESENTS

LACUNA:

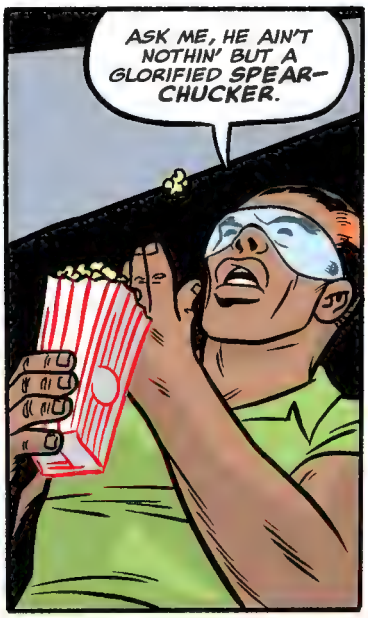
PART ONE: CAPTAIN COCONUT

PETER MILLIGAN-WRITER MICHAEL ALLRED-ARTIST

LAURA ALLRED- COLORIST DOC ALLRED & BLAMBOT-LETTERS JOHN MIESEGAES-ASST. EDITOR

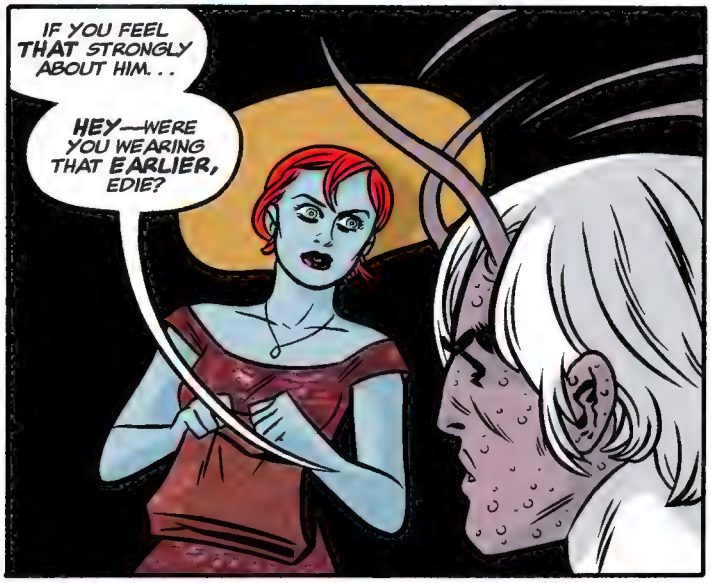
AXEL ALONSO-EDITOR JOE QUESADA-CHIEF BILL JEMAS-PRESIDENT

WOW. HE COULD **SPIKE** ME ANY DAY OF THE WEEK.

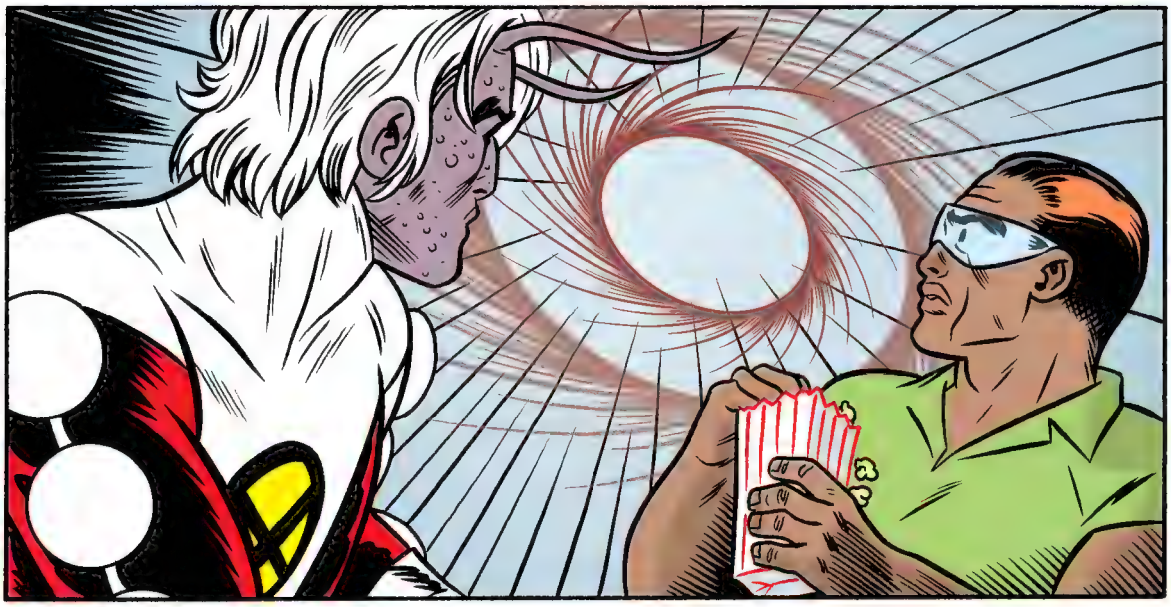


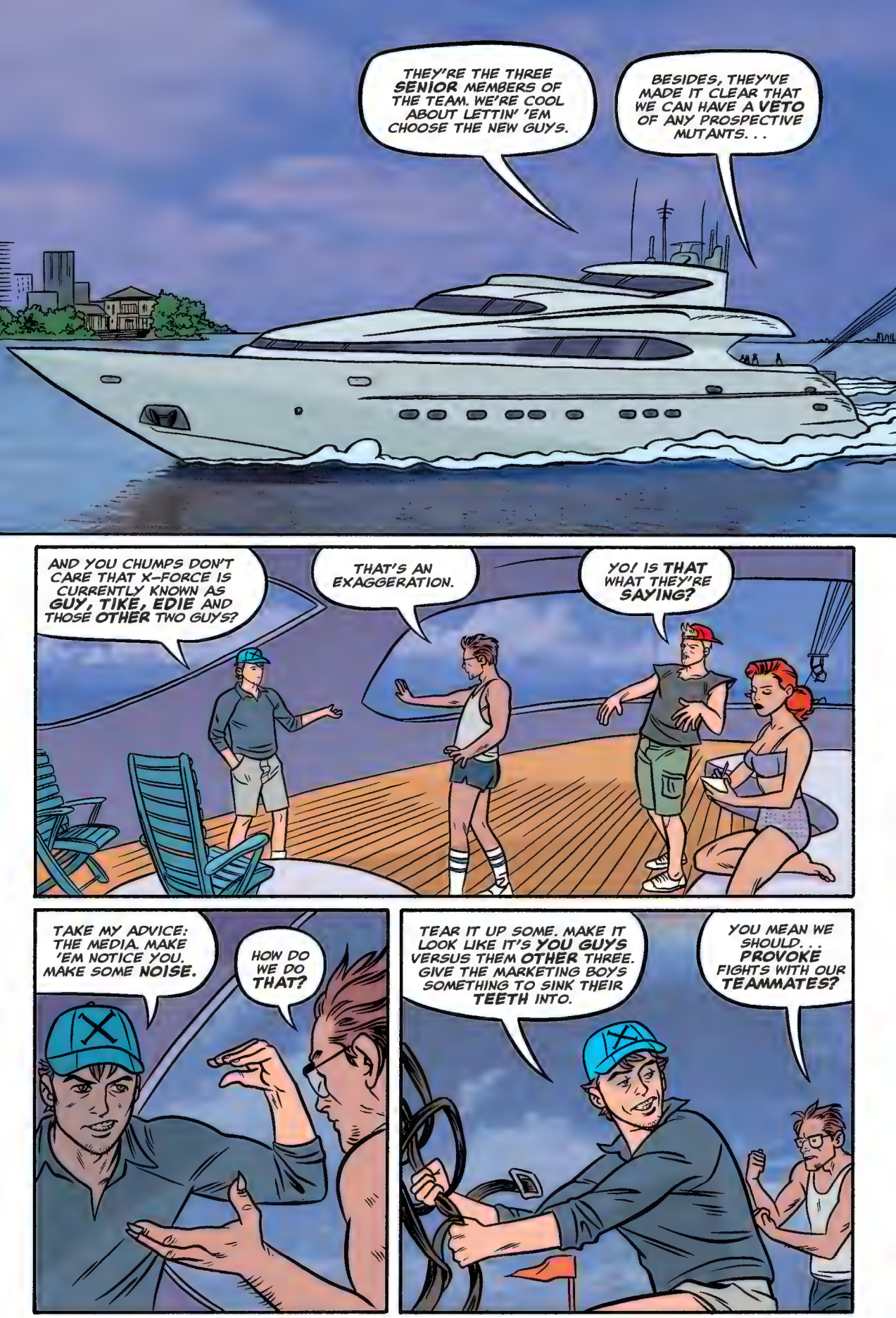
"SPEAR-CHUCKER'? ISN'T THAT A LITTLE... YOU KNOW...
...RACIST?
IT ISN'T RACIST TO SAY THE WORD "RACIST," GUY.

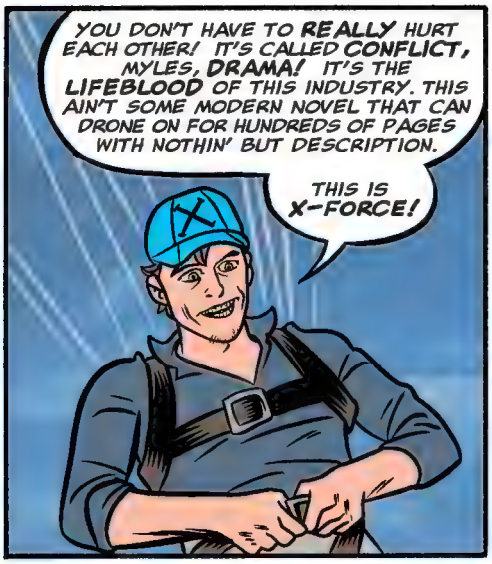
IF YOU SAY IT, IT MIGHT BE. IF I SAY IT, IT AIN'T.
ANYWAYS, THIS HAS NOTHIN' TO DO WITH RACE. I JUST DON'T THINK HE'S... SPECIAL ENOUGH. WE NEED MUTANTS THAT'LL BRING MORE TO THE PARTY.

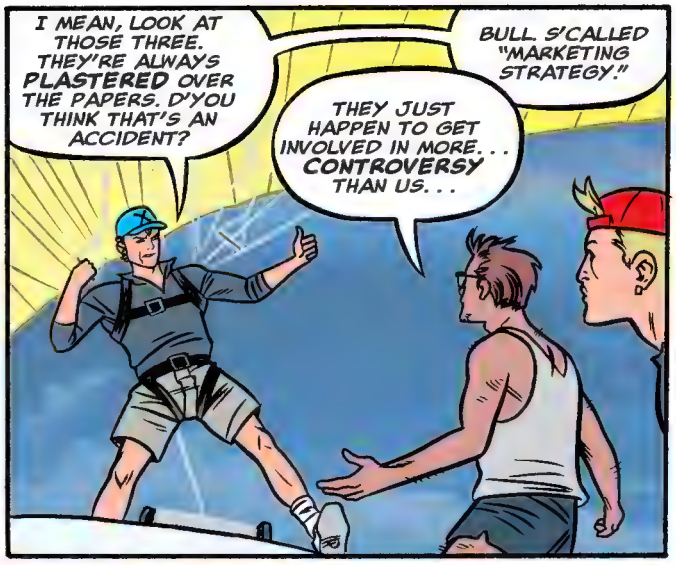

IF YOU FEEL THAT STRONGLY ABOUT HIM...
HEY—WERE YOU WEARING THAT EARLIER, EDIE?

GONNA HAVE TO TAKE A RAINCHECK. I'VE GOT A MEETING WITH A NETWORK ABOUT A SHOW THEY WANT ME TO FRONT.
I WON'T BE LONG.

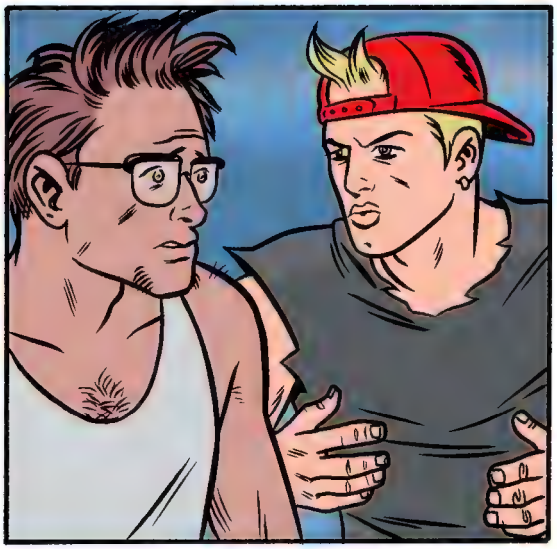


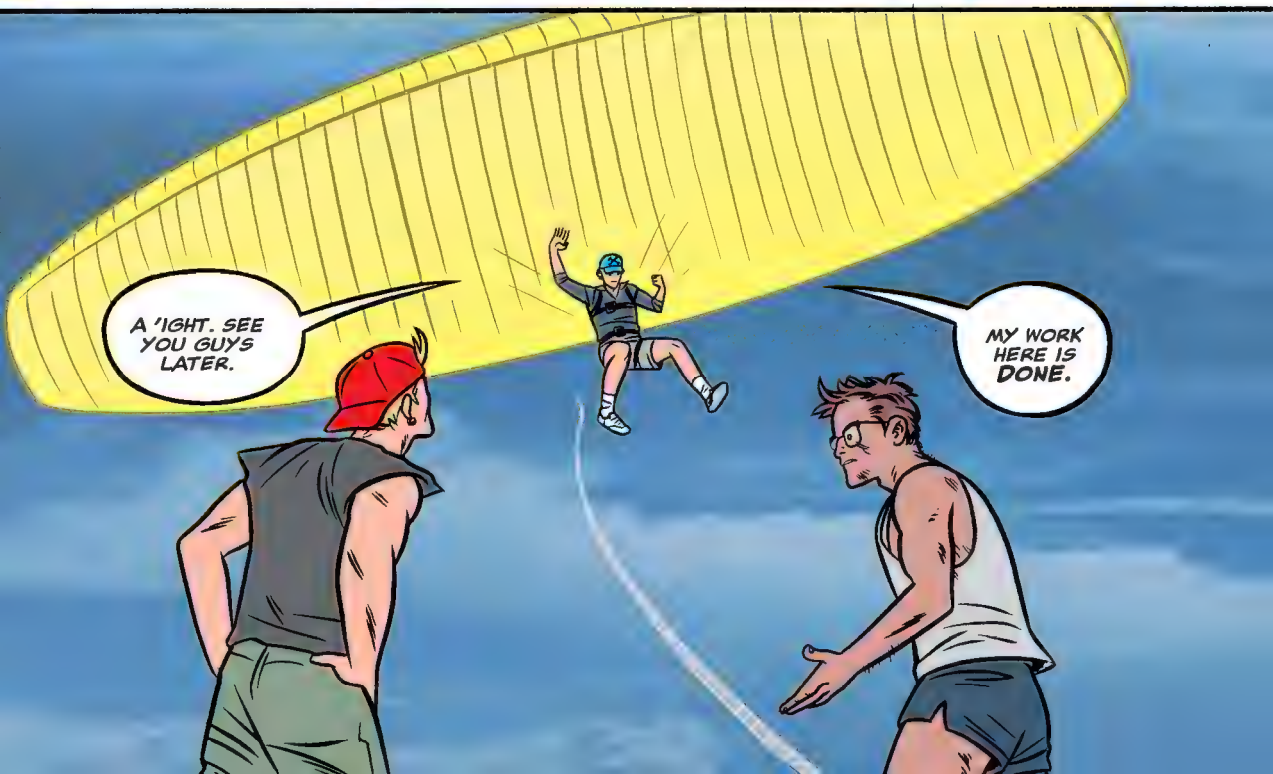

THEY'RE THE THREE SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE TEAM. WE'RE COOL ABOUT LETTIN' 'EM CHOOSE THE NEW GUYS.
BESIDES, THEY'VE MADE IT CLEAR THAT WE CAN HAVE A VETO OF ANY PROSPECTIVE MUTANTS. . .
AND YOU CHUMPS DON'T CARE THAT X-FORCE IS CURRENTLY KNOWN AS GUY, TIKE, EDIE AND THOSE OTHER TWO GUYS?
THAT'S AN EXAGGERATION.
YO! IS THAT WHAT THEY'RE SAYING?
TAKE MY ADVICE: THE MEDIA. MAKE 'EM NOTICE YOU. MAKE SOME NOISE.
HOW DO WE DO THAT?
TEAR IT UP SOME. MAKE IT LOOK LIKE IT'S YOU GUYS VERSUS THEM OTHER THREE. GIVE THE MARKETING BOYS SOMETHING TO SINK THEIR TEETH INTO.
YOU MEAN WE SHOULD. . . PROVOKE FIGHTS WITH OUR TEAMMATES?

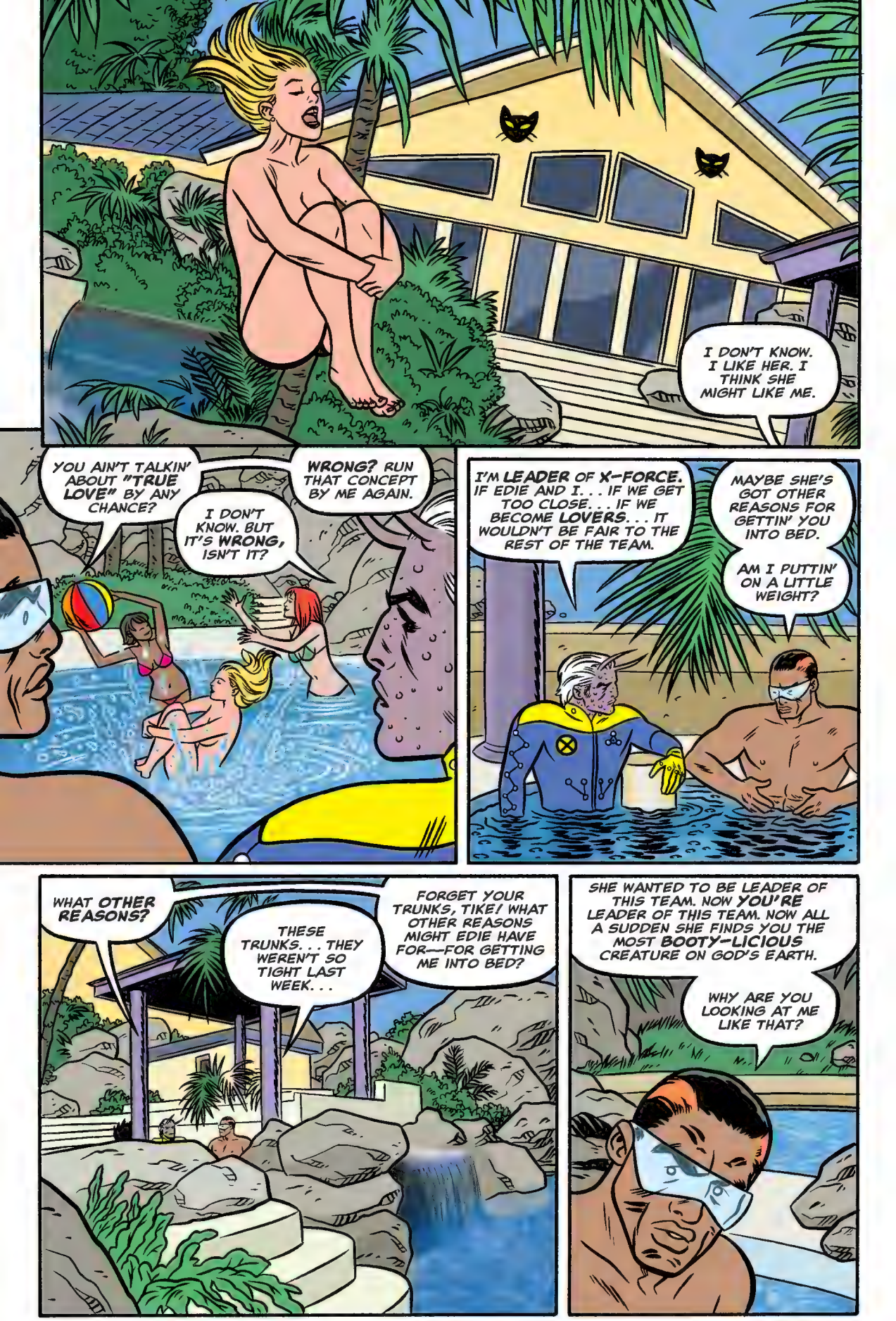

YOU DON'T HAVE TO REALLY HURT EACH OTHER! IT'S CALLED CONFLICT, MYLES, DRAMA! IT'S THE LIFEBLOOD OF THIS INDUSTRY. THIS AIN'T SOME MODERN NOVEL THAT CAN DRONE ON FOR HUNDREDS OF PAGES WITH NOTHIN' BUT DESCRIPTION.
THIS IS X-FORCE!

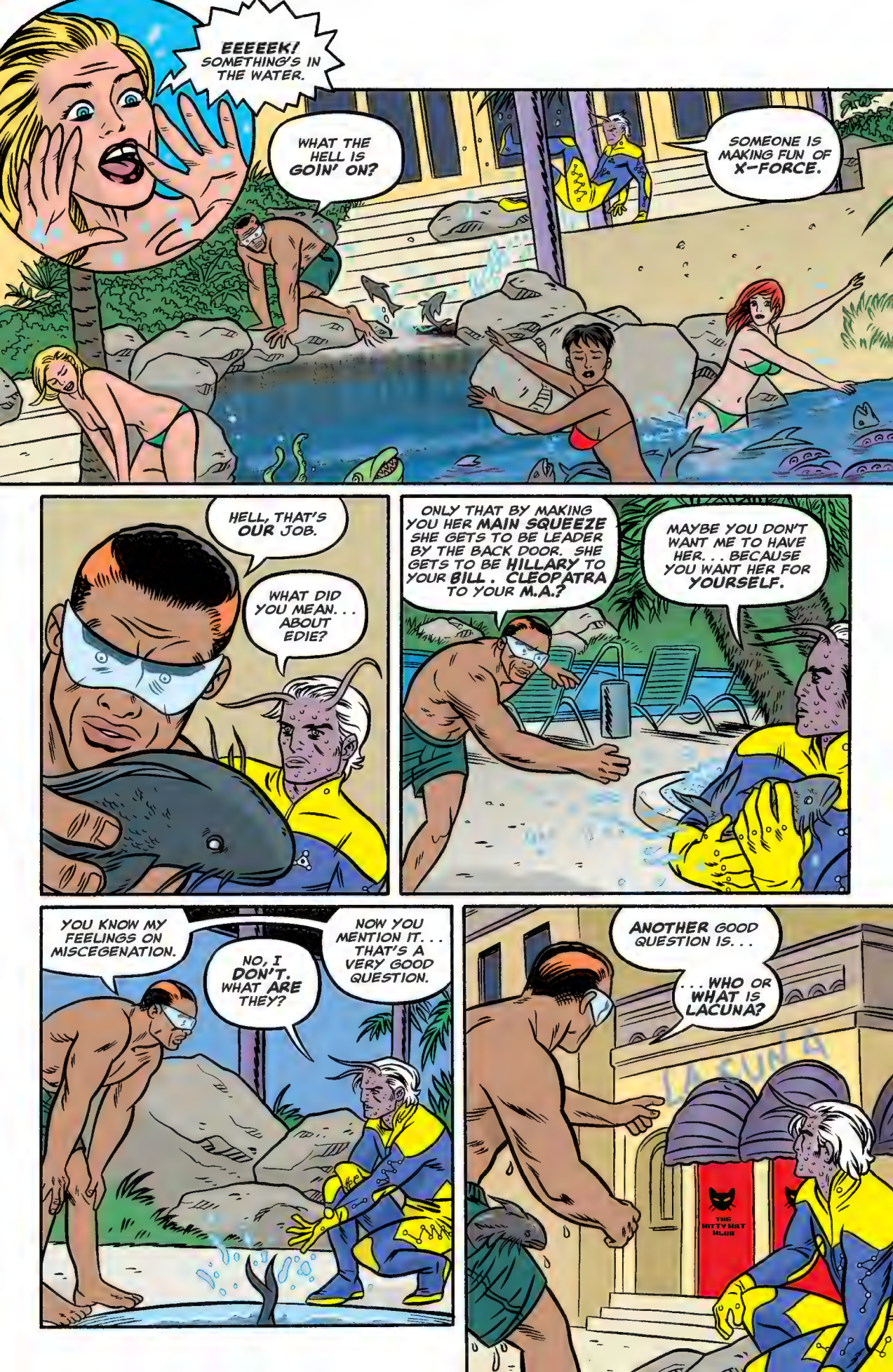

I MEAN, LOOK AT THOSE THREE. THEY'RE ALWAYS PLASTERED OVER THE PAPERS. D'YOU THINK THAT'S AN ACCIDENT?
BULL. S'CALLED "MARKETING STRATEGY."
THEY JUST HAPPEN TO GET INVOLVED IN MORE... CONTROVERSY THAN US...

GUY: THE SENSITIVE BOY NEXT DOOR. EDIE: THE AMBITIOUS SEX KITTEN. TIKE: THE ANGRY BLACK MAN SCARIN' THE HELL OUT OF MIDDLE AMERICA.




A 'IGHT. SEE YOU GUYS LATER.
MY WORK HERE IS DONE.


I DON'T KNOW. I LIKE HER. I THINK SHE MIGHT LIKE ME.
YOU AIN'T TALKIN' ABOUT "TRUE LOVE" BY ANY CHANCE?
I DON'T KNOW. BUT IT'S WRONG, ISN'T IT?
WRONG? RUN THAT CONCEPT BY ME AGAIN.
I'M LEADER OF X-FORCE. IF EDIE AND I... IF WE GET TOO CLOSE... IF WE BECOME LOVERS... IT WOULDN'T BE FAIR TO THE REST OF THE TEAM.
MAYBE SHE'S GOT OTHER REASONS FOR GETTIN' YOU INTO BED.
AM I PUTTIN' ON A LITTLE WEIGHT?
WHAT OTHER REASONS?
THESE TRUNKS... THEY WEREN'T SO TIGHT LAST WEEK...
FORGET YOUR TRUNKS, TIKE! WHAT OTHER REASONS MIGHT EDIE HAVE FOR—FOR GETTING ME INTO BED?
SHE WANTED TO BE LEADER OF THIS TEAM. NOW YOU'RE LEADER OF THIS TEAM. NOW ALL A SUDDEN SHE FINDS YOU THE MOST BOOTY-LICIOUS CREATURE ON GOD'S EARTH.
WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME LIKE THAT?


EEEEEK! SOMETHING'S IN THE WATER.
WHAT THE HELL IS GOIN' ON?
SOMEONE IS MAKING FUN OF X-FORCE.
HELL, THAT'S OUR JOB.
WHAT DID YOU MEAN... ABOUT EDIE?
ONLY THAT BY MAKING YOU HER MAIN SQUEEZE SHE GETS TO BE LEADER BY THE BACK DOOR. SHE GETS TO BE HILLARY TO YOUR BILL. CLEOPATRA TO YOUR M.A.?
MAYBE YOU DON'T WANT ME TO HAVE HER... BECAUSE YOU WANT HER FOR YOURSELF.
YOU KNOW MY FEELINGS ON MISCEGENATION.
NO, I DON'T. WHAT ARE THEY?
NOW YOU MENTION IT... THAT'S A VERY GOOD QUESTION.
ANOTHER GOOD QUESTION IS...
...WHO OR WHAT IS LACUNA?
LACUNA
THE KITTY KAT CLUB

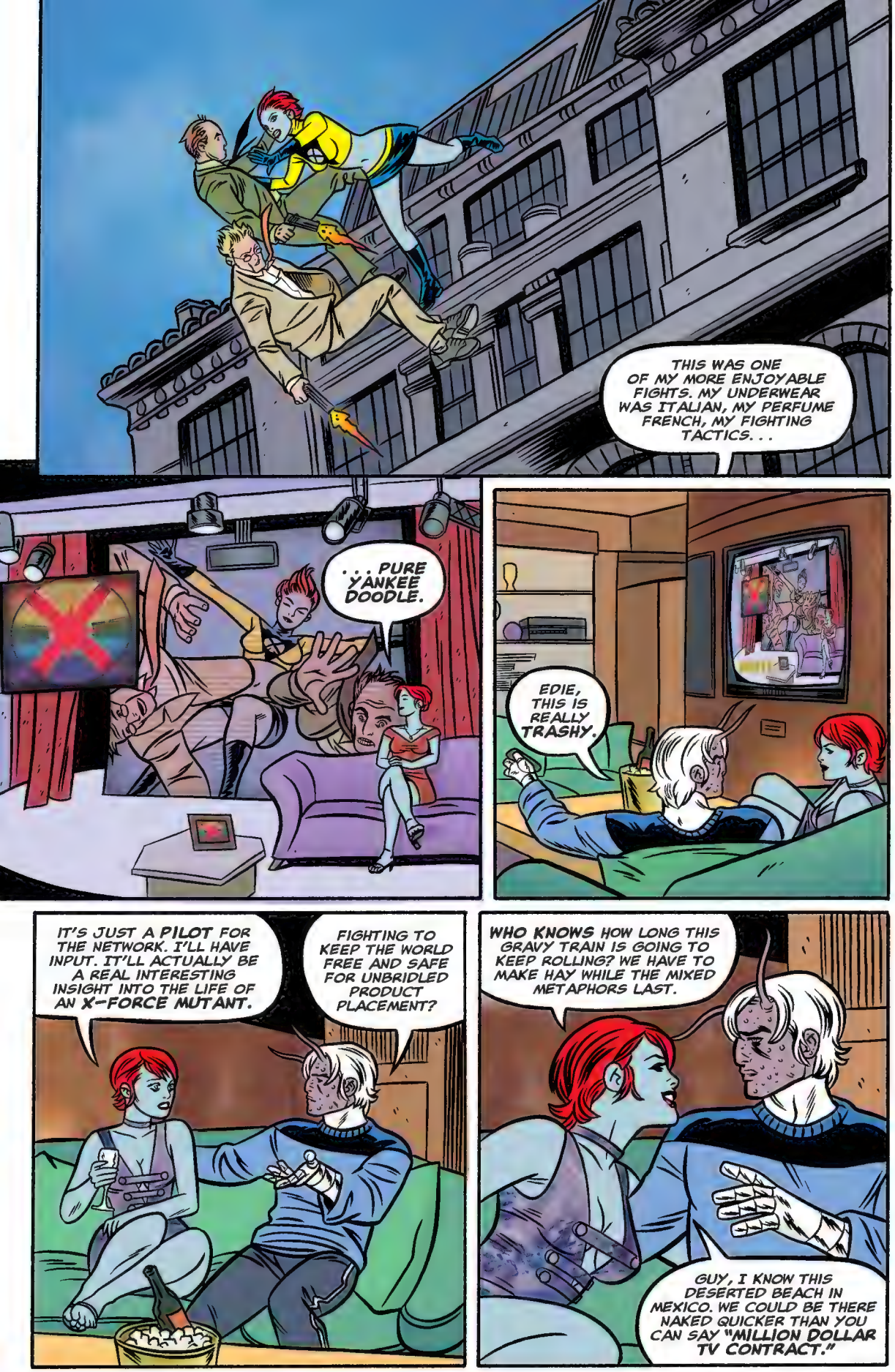
A HIATUS... A MISSING PORTION... ESPECIALLY IN A MANUSCRIPT OR TEXT. FROM LATIN "LACUS," LAKE.

IN A PSYCHOLOGICAL SENSE, A LACUNA CAN ALSO BE USED TO DESCRIBE A MISSING PAST OF SOMEONE'S LIFE...
YOU MEAN LIKE... A BLANK SPOT?

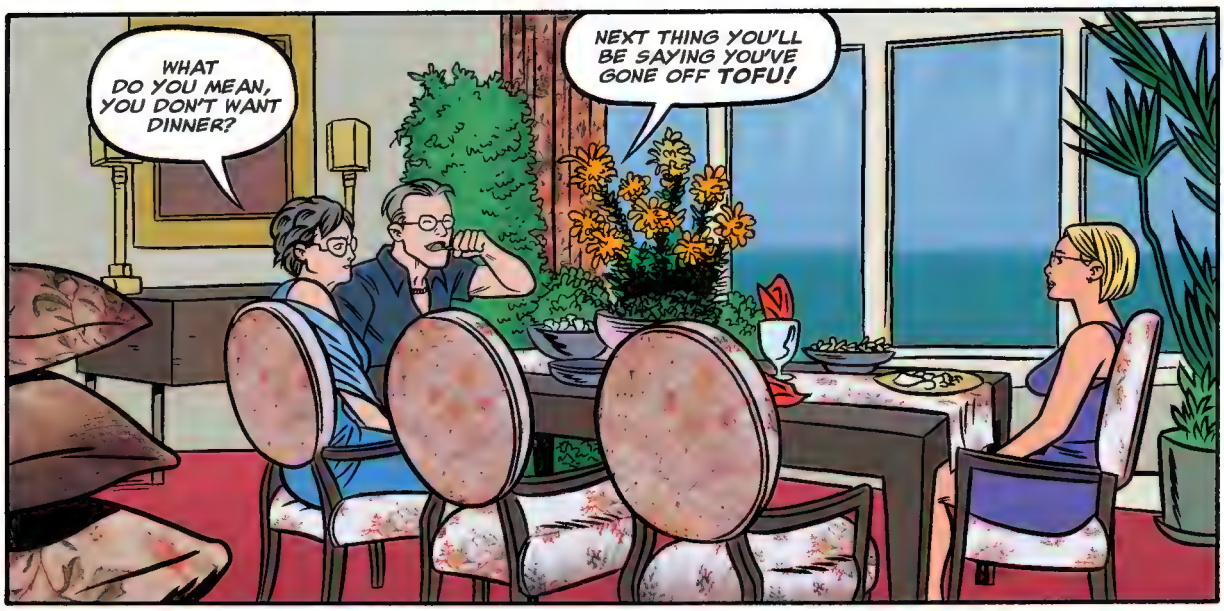
YO, DAWG—YOU DISSIN' MY BRO'? CALLIN' HIM A BLANK SPOT?
THWACK

GO ON, MY LITTLE PROFITABLE UNITS! FIGHT! FIGHT!

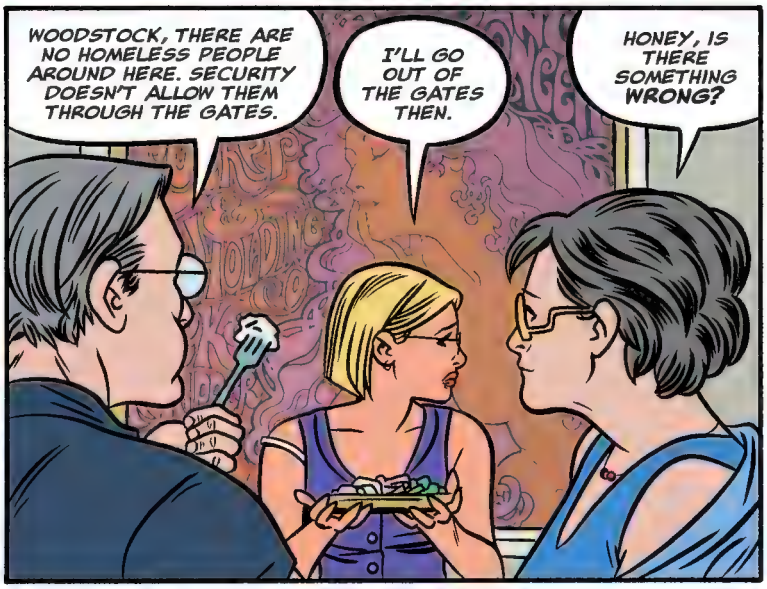
JEEZ! WHAT'S GOT INTO YOU TWO TODAY?
IT'S LIKE YOU'RE LOOKIN' FOR A FIGHT!


THIS WAS ONE OF MY MORE ENJOYABLE FIGHTS. MY UNDERWEAR WAS ITALIAN, MY PERFUME FRENCH, MY FIGHTING TACTICS. . .
. . . PURE YANKEE DOODLE.
EDIE, THIS IS REALLY TRASHY.
IT'S JUST A PILOT FOR THE NETWORK. I'LL HAVE INPUT. IT'LL ACTUALLY BE A REAL INTERESTING INSIGHT INTO THE LIFE OF AN X-FORCE MUTANT.
FIGHTING TO KEEP THE WORLD FREE AND SAFE FOR UNBRIDLED PRODUCT PLACEMENT?
WHO KNOWS HOW LONG THIS GRAVY TRAIN IS GOING TO KEEP ROLLING? WE HAVE TO MAKE HAY WHILE THE MIXED METAPHORS LAST.
GUY, I KNOW THIS DESERTED BEACH IN MEXICO. WE COULD BE THERE NAKED QUICKER THAN YOU CAN SAY "MILLION DOLLAR TV CONTRACT."

WAIT! STOP PORTING, EDIE!
WHAT'S UP?
LET ME REPHRASE THAT. . .
I'D RATHER YOU DIDN'T REPHRASE ANYTHING. I. . . I DON'T THINK WE SHOULD DO THIS.
DO WHAT?
EMBARK UPON AN AFFAIR.
EAU DE X
AFFAIR? LIGHTEN UP, MR. SENSITIVE.
ALL I WAS TALKING ABOUT WAS HAVING SOME FUN. AFFAIR? SHEESH. THAT'S JUST SUCH A. . . NORM TERM.
YOU KNOW. . . BEING MUTANTS. . . MEANS WE CAN HAVE MUTANT MORALITY TOO. WE DON'T HAVE TO APE THE NORMS' WORN-OUT CODES OF CONDUCT. WE CAN MAKE OUR OWN RULES. . .
LACUNA

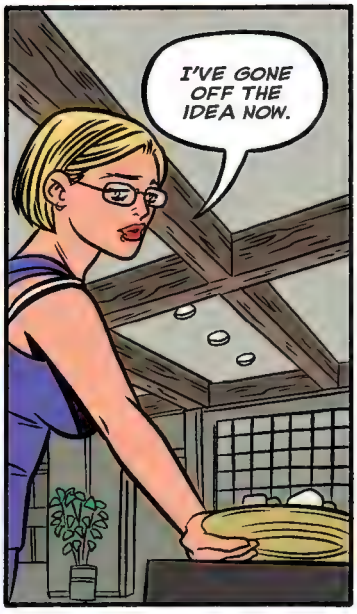

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, YOU DON'T WANT DINNER?
NEXT THING YOU'LL BE SAYING YOU'VE GONE OFF TOFU!

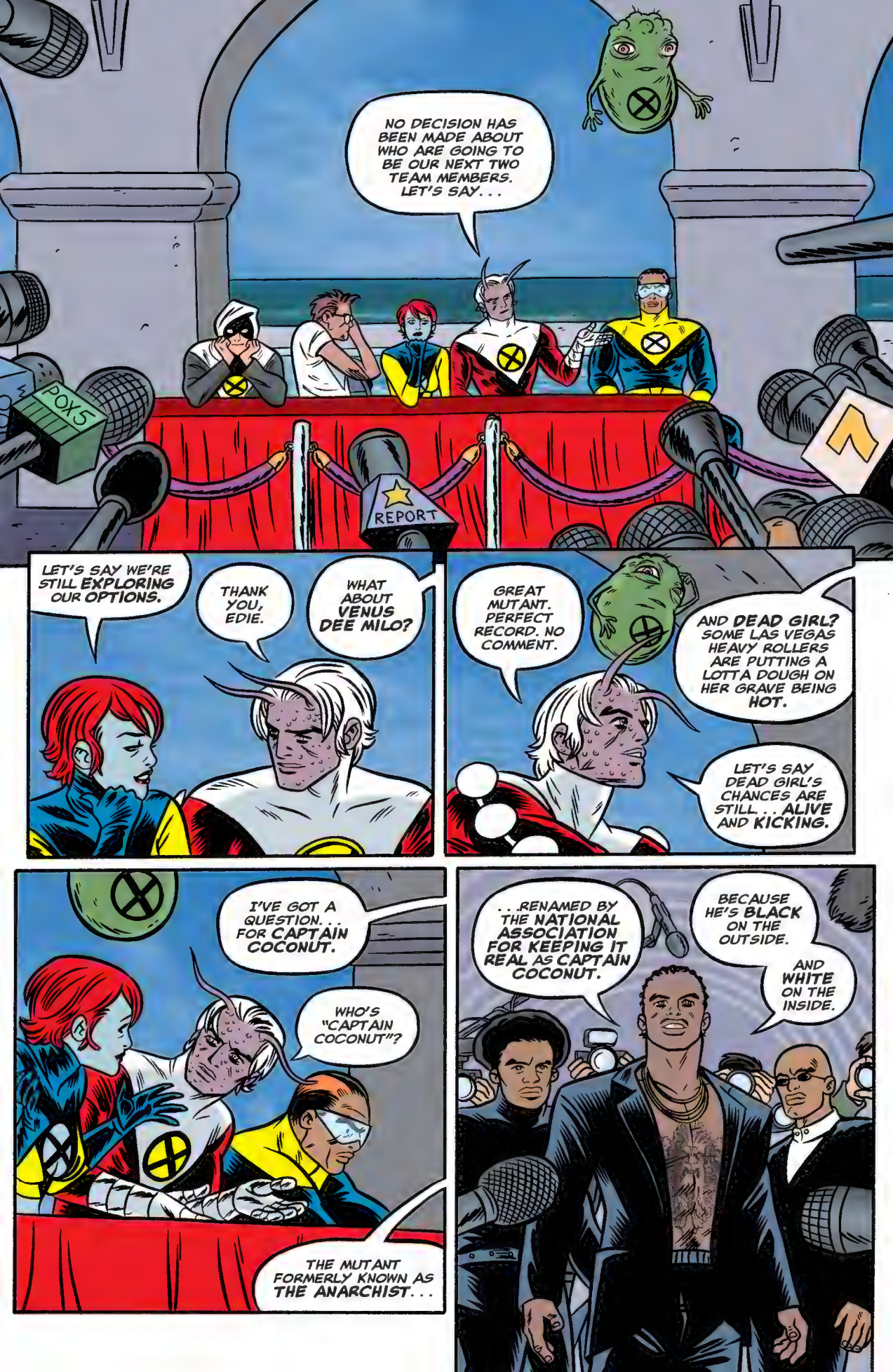
I'M GOING TO GIVE MY DINNER TO HOMELESS PEOPLE.

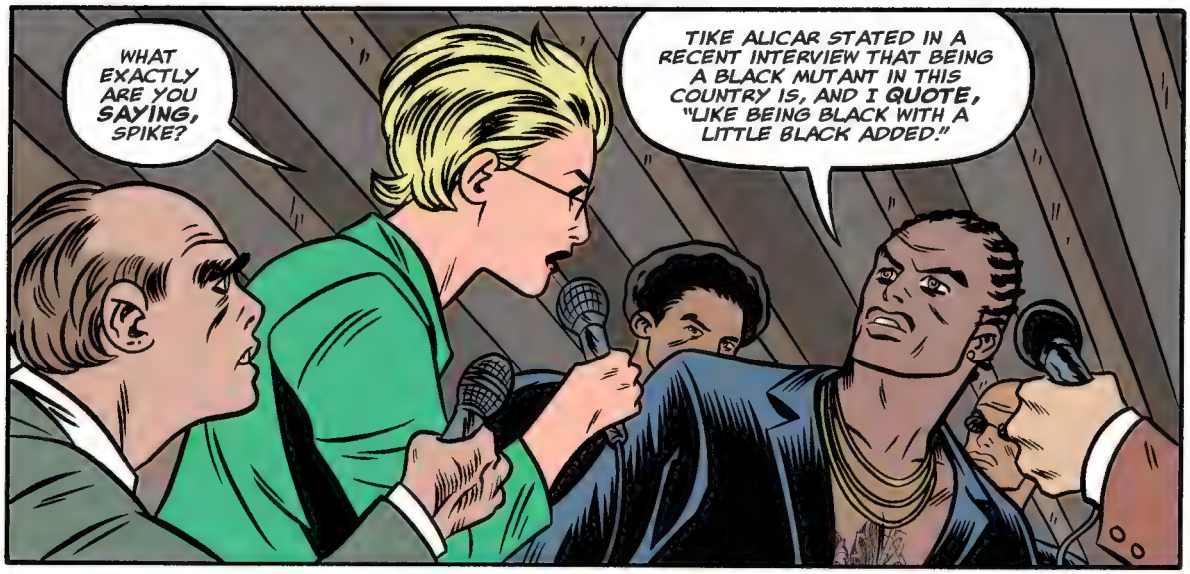

WOODSTOCK, THERE ARE NO HOMELESS PEOPLE AROUND HERE. SECURITY DOESN'T ALLOW THEM THROUGH THE GATES.
I'LL GO OUT OF THE GATES THEN.
HONEY, IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG?

IF YOU'VE GOT A PROBLEM. . .
IF YOU'VE GOT INVOLVED IN DRUGS. . .
YOU KNOW YOU CAN TALK TO US.
OR YOU'RE PREGNANT. . .
OR GAY. . .

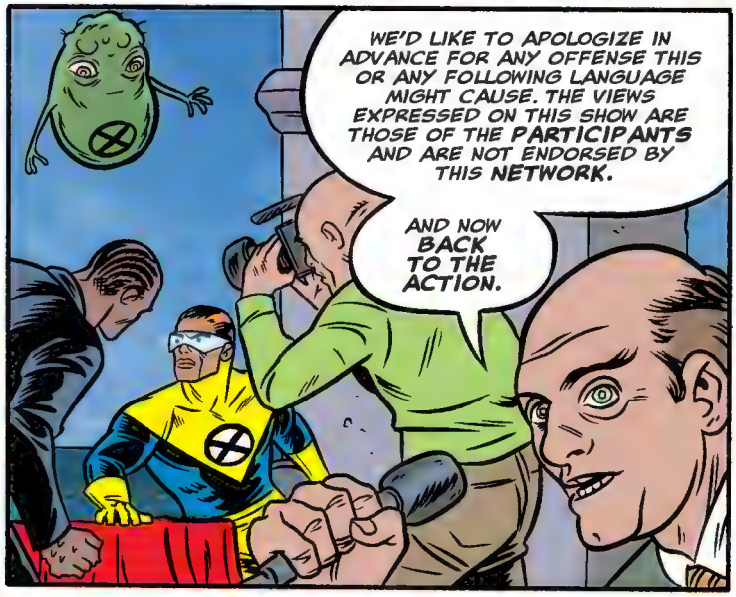
YEAH. I KNOW.
I'LL DRIVE YOU. WE CAN HIT SANTA MONICA.
I'LL COME, TOO.


I'VE GONE OFF THE IDEA NOW.

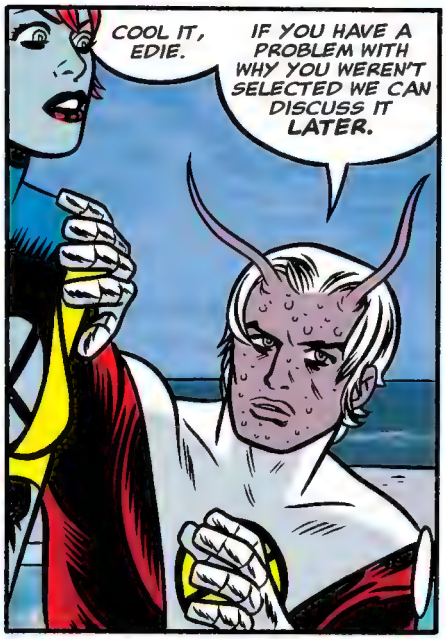

NO DECISION HAS BEEN MADE ABOUT WHO ARE GOING TO BE OUR NEXT TWO TEAM MEMBERS. LET'S SAY...
POX5
REPORT
LET'S SAY WE'RE STILL EXPLORING OUR OPTIONS.
THANK YOU, EDIE.
WHAT ABOUT VENUS DEE MILO?
GREAT MUTANT. PERFECT RECORD. NO COMMENT.
AND DEAD GIRL? SOME LAS VEGAS HEAVY ROLLERS ARE PUTTING A LOTTA DOUGH ON HER GRAVE BEING HOT.
LET'S SAY DEAD GIRL'S CHANCES ARE STILL.. ALIVE AND KICKING.
I'VE GOT A QUESTION... FOR CAPTAIN COCONUT.
WHO'S "CAPTAIN COCONUT"?
THE MUTANT FORMERLY KNOWN AS THE ANARCHIST...
...RENAMED BY THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR KEEPING IT REAL AS CAPTAIN COCONUT.
BECAUSE HE'S BLACK ON THE OUTSIDE.
AND WHITE ON THE INSIDE.


WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOU SAYING, SPIKE?
TIKE ALICAR STATED IN A RECENT INTERVIEW THAT BEING A BLACK MUTANT IN THIS COUNTRY IS, AND I QUOTE, "LIKE BEING BLACK WITH A LITTLE BLACK ADDED."

BUT THE QUESTION IS... IS HE A BLACK MAN WHO'S A MUTANT... OR A MUTANT WHO'S BLACK?


WE'D LIKE TO APOLOGIZE IN ADVANCE FOR ANY OFFENSE THIS OR ANY FOLLOWING LANGUAGE MIGHT CAUSE. THE VIEWS EXPRESSED ON THIS SHOW ARE THOSE OF THE PARTICIPANTS AND ARE NOT ENDORSED BY THIS NETWORK.
AND NOW BACK TO THE ACTION.

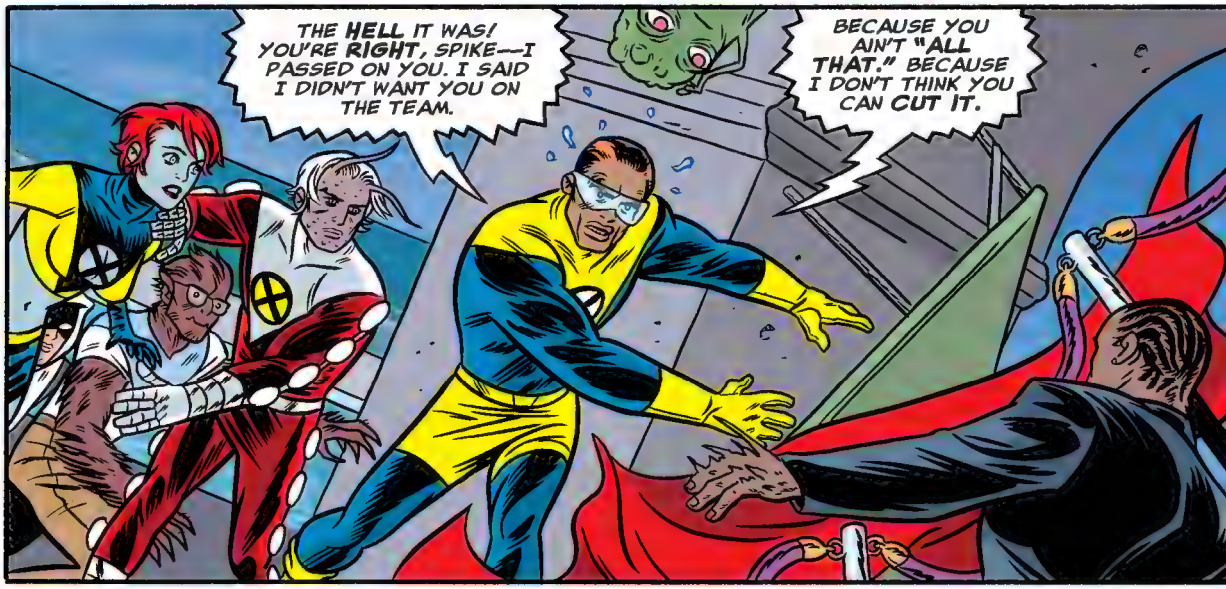
THAT'S JUST DUMB. I MEAN, AM I A WOMAN WHO'S A MUTANT OR A MUTANT WHO'S A WOMAN?
YOU'RE WHITE.
THAT'S NOT HOW I CHOOSE TO DEFINE MYSELF.


COOL IT, EDIE.
IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH WHY YOU WEREN'T SELECTED WE CAN DISCUSS IT LATER.

NO. WE'LL DISCUSS IT NOW. I WASN'T SELECTED BECAUSE TIKE ALICAR IS THE TOKEN AFRICAN-AMERICAN ON X-FORCE, AND INSTEAD OF USING HIS POSITION TO HELP HIS PEOPLE, HE USES IT TO KEEP 'EM DOWN.

WHAT I DO OR DON'T DO WITH MY POSITION IS NONE OF YOUR GAH-DAMN BUSINESS.

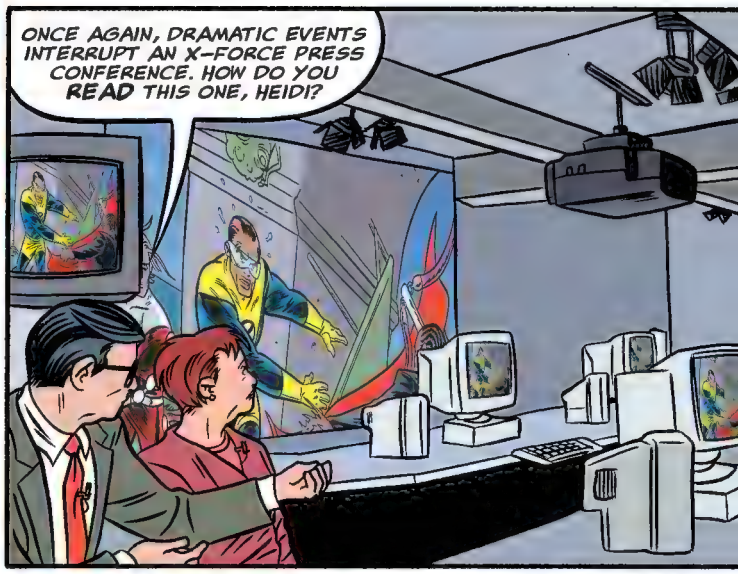
IT'S MY BUSINESS WHEN A CAPTAIN COCONUT STOPS ME JOINING X-FORCE.
THAT WAS A DEMOCRATIC DECISION MADE BY THE THREE SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE TEAM.

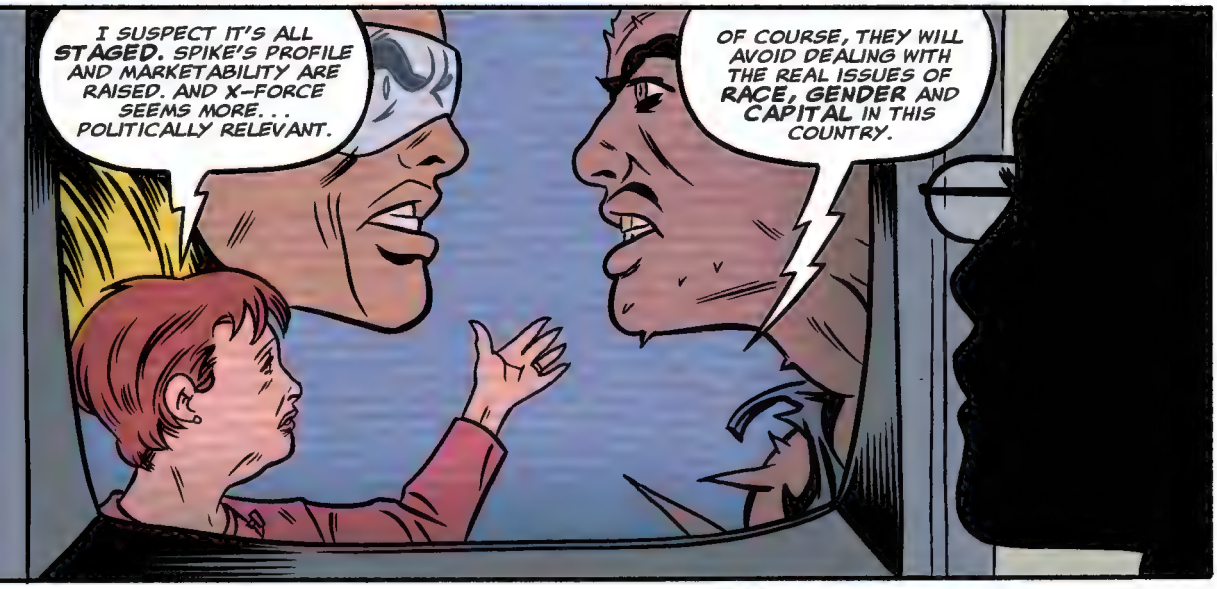

THE HELL IT WAS! YOU'RE RIGHT, SPIKE—I PASSED ON YOU. I SAID I DIDN'T WANT YOU ON THE TEAM.
BECAUSE YOU AIN'T "ALL THAT." BECAUSE I DON'T THINK YOU CAN CUT IT.

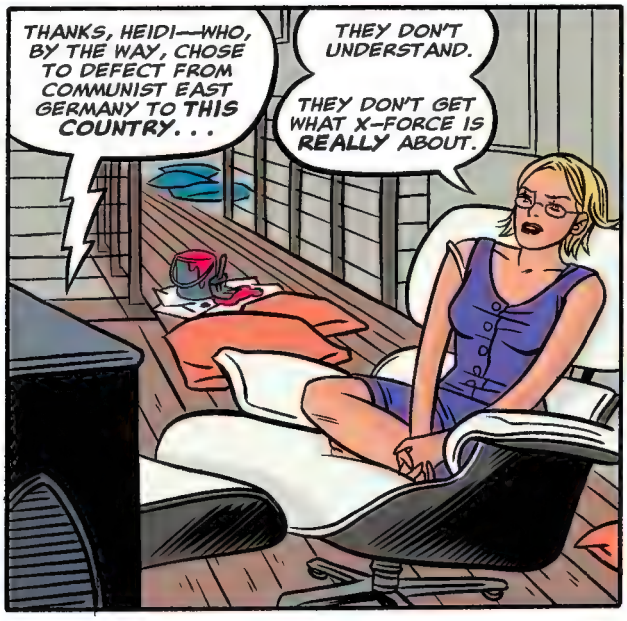
UH-UH. BECAUSE YOU'RE SCARED.
BECAUSE I'M YOUNGER, BADDER, AND BLACKER'N YOU.

I'M NEVER REALLY SURE ABOUT THESE THINGS. . . BUT ISN'T THIS ABOUT THE TIME YOU KICK HIS ASS?

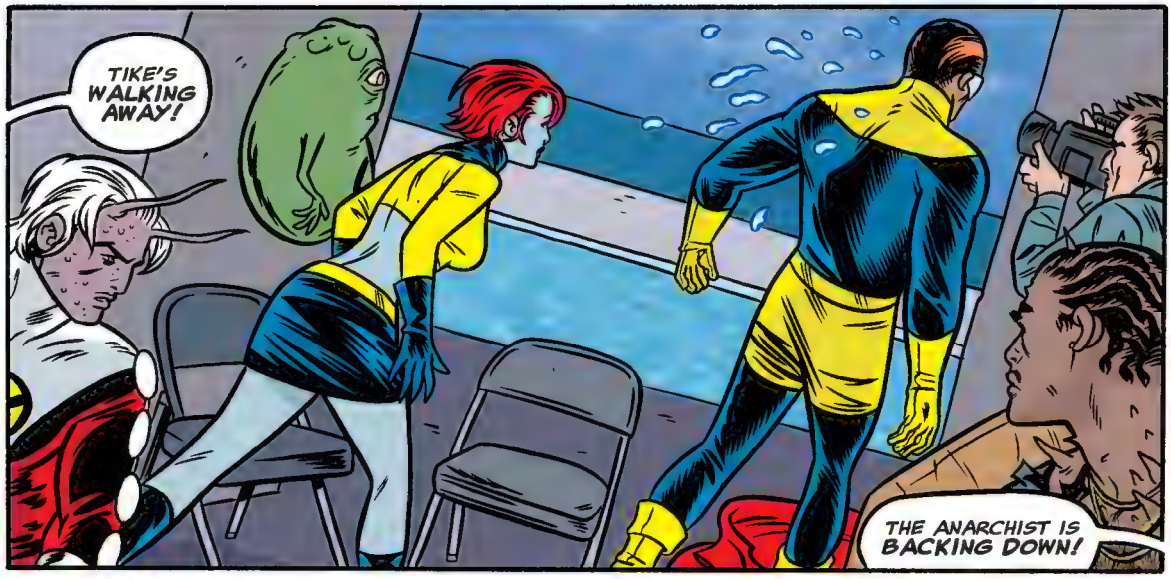
WHAT YOU WAITIN' FOR, CAP'N?


ONCE AGAIN, DRAMATIC EVENTS INTERRUPT AN X-FORCE PRESS CONFERENCE. HOW DO YOU READ THIS ONE, HEIDI?

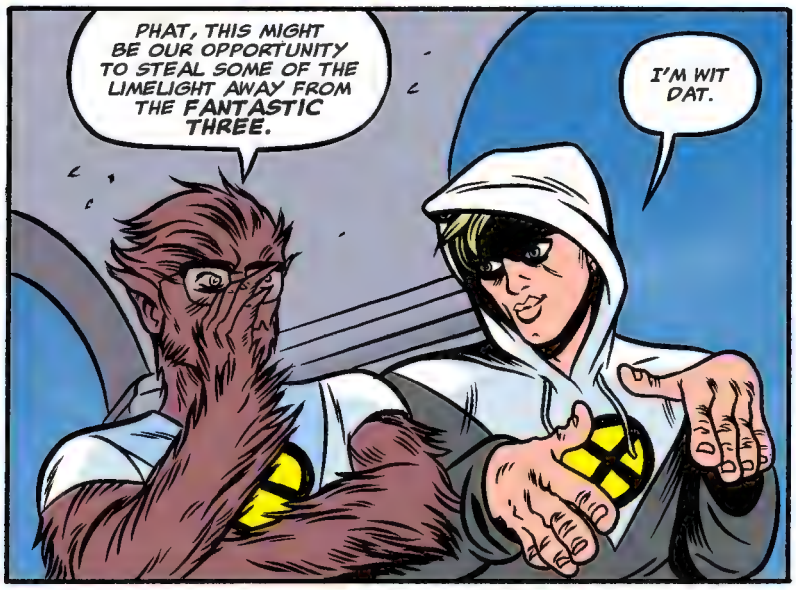

I SUSPECT IT'S ALL STAGED. SPIKE'S PROFILE AND MARKETABILITY ARE RAISED. AND X-FORCE SEEMS MORE... POLITICALLY RELEVANT.
OF COURSE, THEY WILL AVOID DEALING WITH THE REAL ISSUES OF RACE, GENDER AND CAPITAL IN THIS COUNTRY.

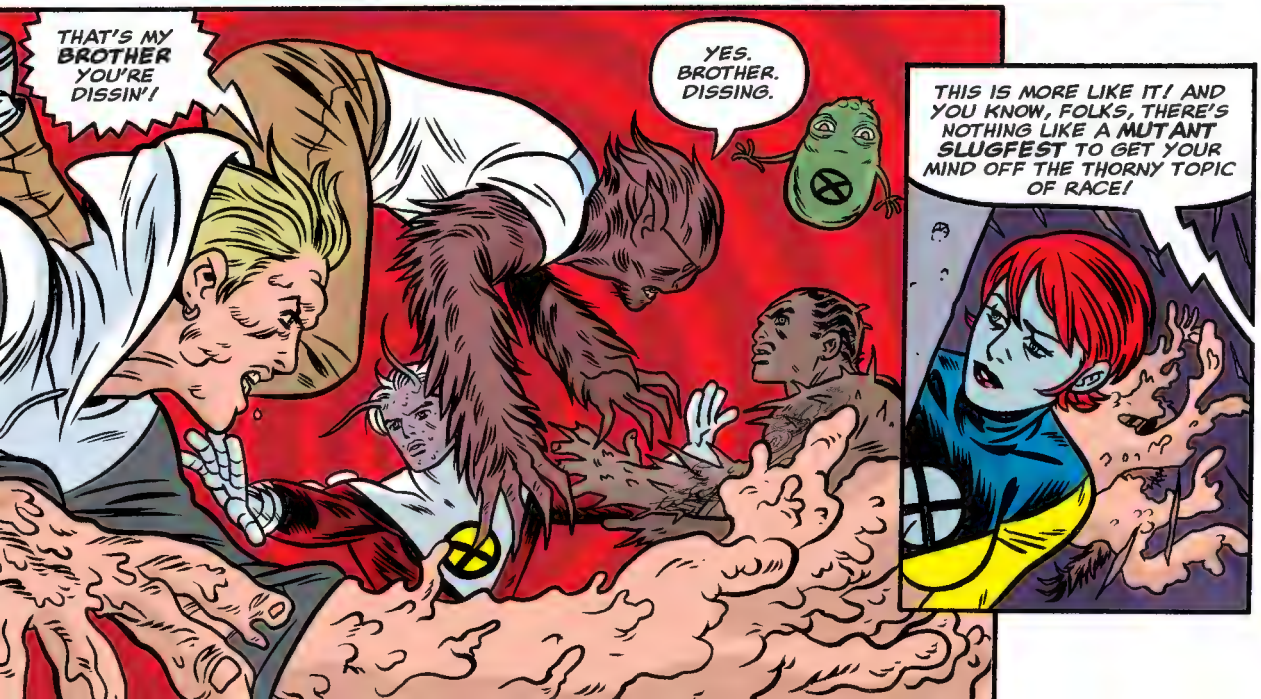

THANKS, HEIDI—WHO, BY THE WAY, CHOSE TO DEFECT FROM COMMUNIST EAST GERMANY TO THIS COUNTRY...
THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND.
THEY DON'T GET WHAT X-FORCE IS REALLY ABOUT.

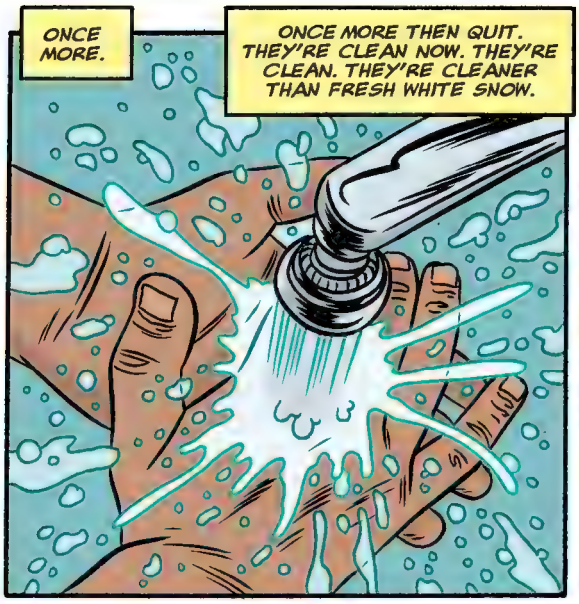
IT LOOKS LIKE TIKE AIN'T GONNA TAKE ANY MORE SMACK-TALK.


TIKE'S WALKING AWAY!
THE ANARCHIST IS BACKING DOWN!

GUESS WE KNOW WHICH BROTHER CAN'T CUT IT.


PHAT, THIS MIGHT BE OUR OPPORTUNITY TO STEAL SOME OF THE LIMELIGHT AWAY FROM THE FANTASTIC THREE.
I'M WIT DAT.

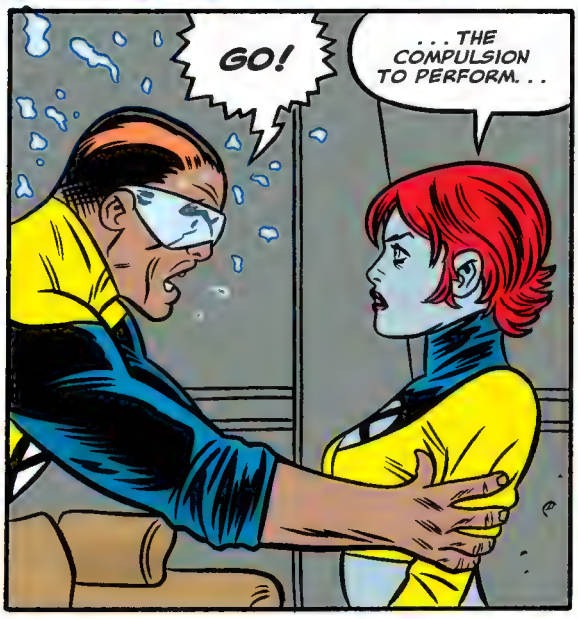

THAT'S MY BROTHER YOU'RE DISSIN'!
YES. BROTHER. DISSING.
THIS IS MORE LIKE IT! AND YOU KNOW, FOLKS, THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A MUTANT SLUGFEST TO GET YOUR MIND OFF THE THORNY TOPIC OF RACE!

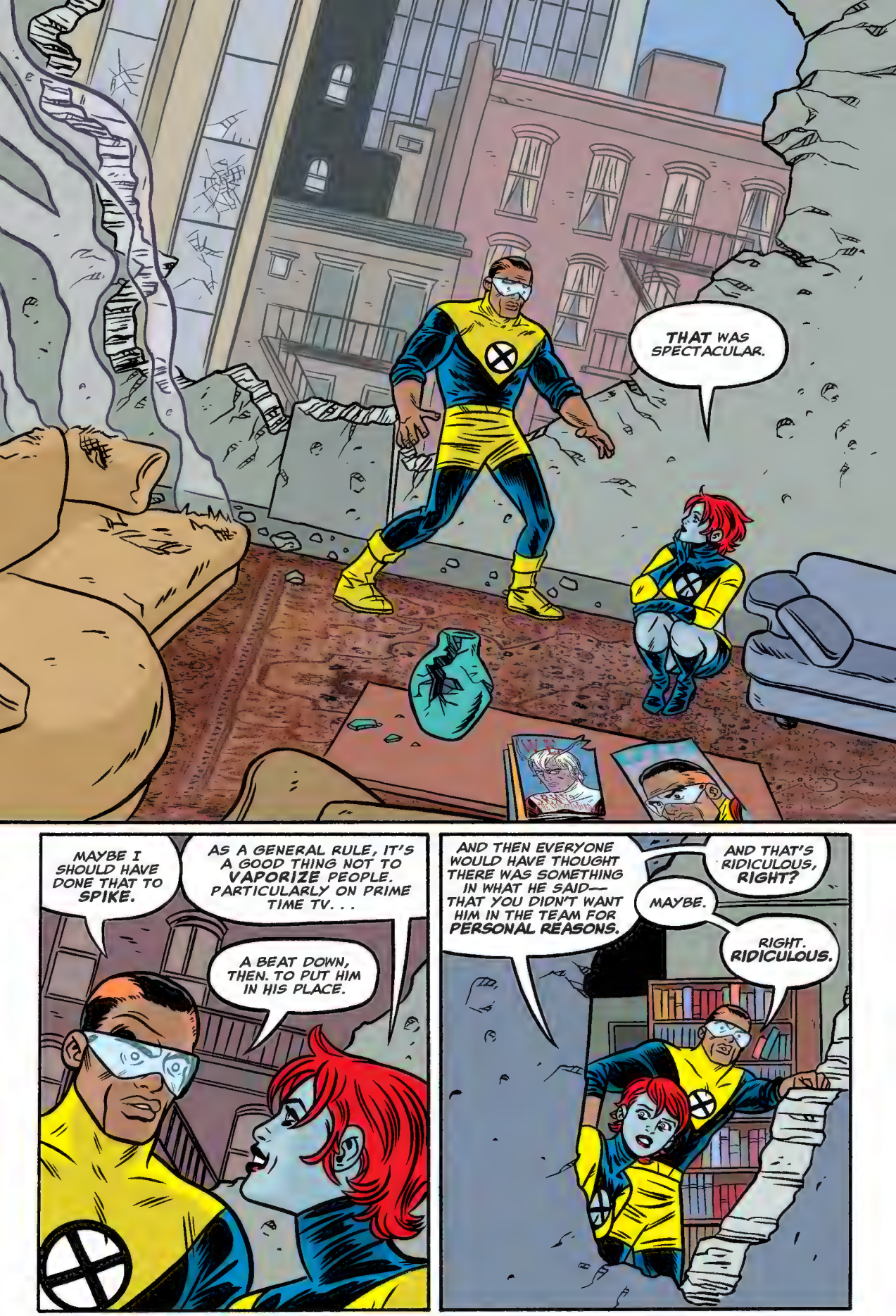

ONCE MORE.
ONCE MORE THEN QUIT. THEY'RE CLEAN NOW. THEY'RE CLEAN. THEY'RE CLEANER THAN FRESH WHITE SNOW.

OKAY. ONCE MORE. BUT THIS HAS GOT TO BE THE LAST TIME.

I GUESS THERE'S NO PROBLEM SO BIG THAT WASHING YOUR HANDS FIFTEEN TIMES WON'T HELP.
EDIE?

GET OUT OF HERE, EDIE!
WHAT DO THEY CALL IT? OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER. . .

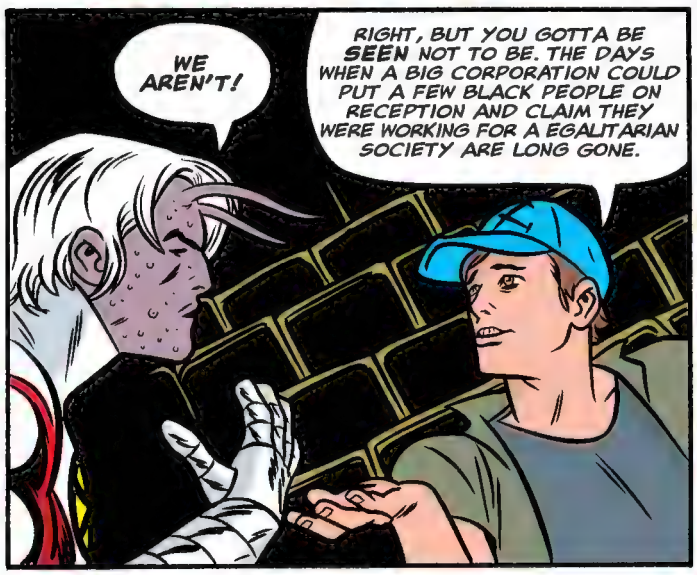

GO!
. . . THE COMPULSION TO PERFORM. . .


THAT WAS SPECTACULAR.
MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE DONE THAT TO SPIKE.
AS A GENERAL RULE, IT'S A GOOD THING NOT TO VAPORIZE PEOPLE. PARTICULARLY ON PRIME TIME TV. . .
A BEAT DOWN, THEN. TO PUT HIM IN HIS PLACE.
AND THEN EVERYONE WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THERE WAS SOMETHING IN WHAT HE SAID— THAT YOU DIDN'T WANT HIM IN THE TEAM FOR PERSONAL REASONS.
AND THAT'S RIDICULOUS, RIGHT?
MAYBE.
RIGHT. RIDICULOUS.

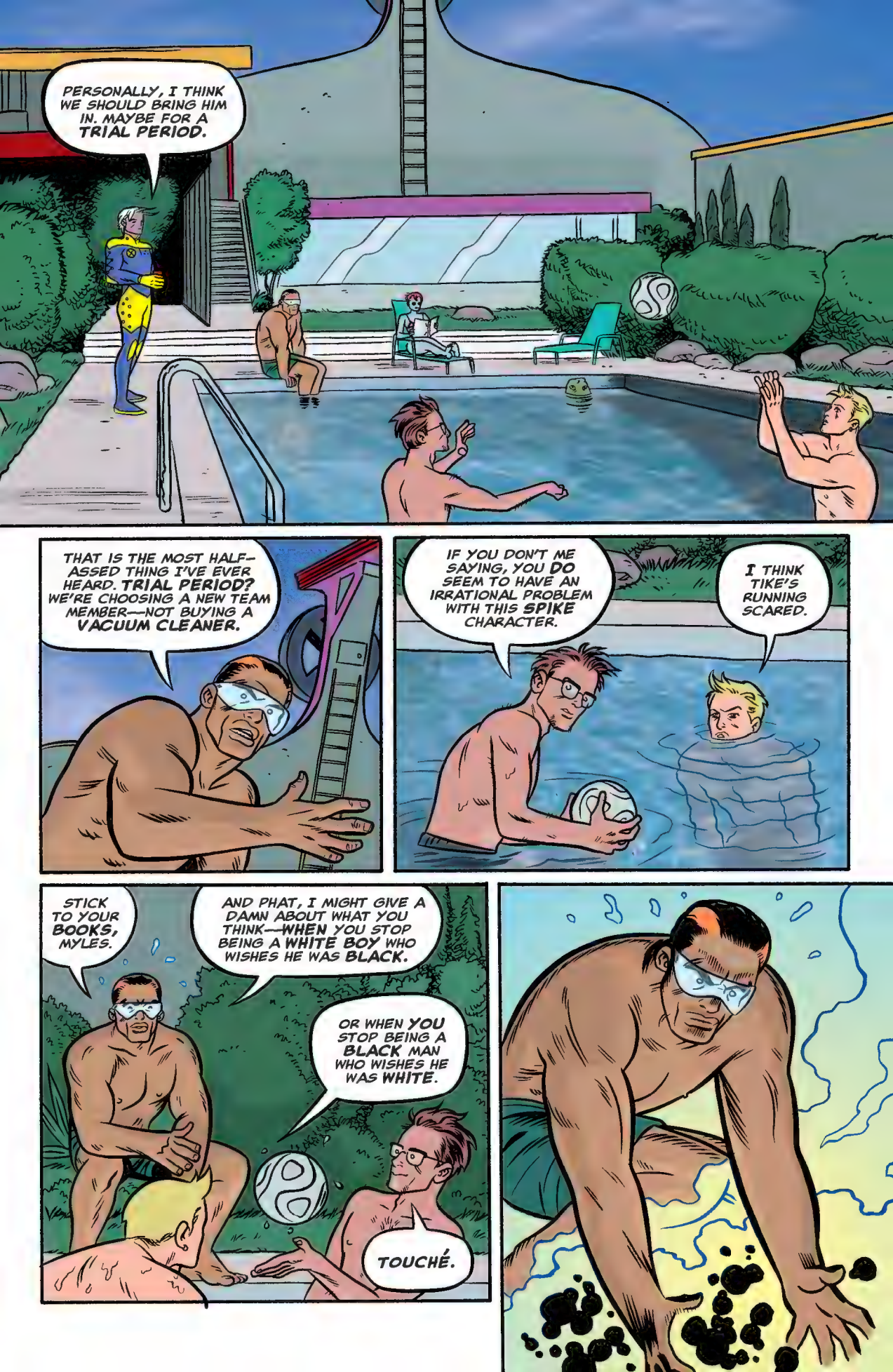
THAT'S PRETTY IMPRESSIVE, AIN'T IT? I MEAN, ASK ME, HE LOOKS LIKE X-FORCE MATERIAL THROUGH AND THROUGH.

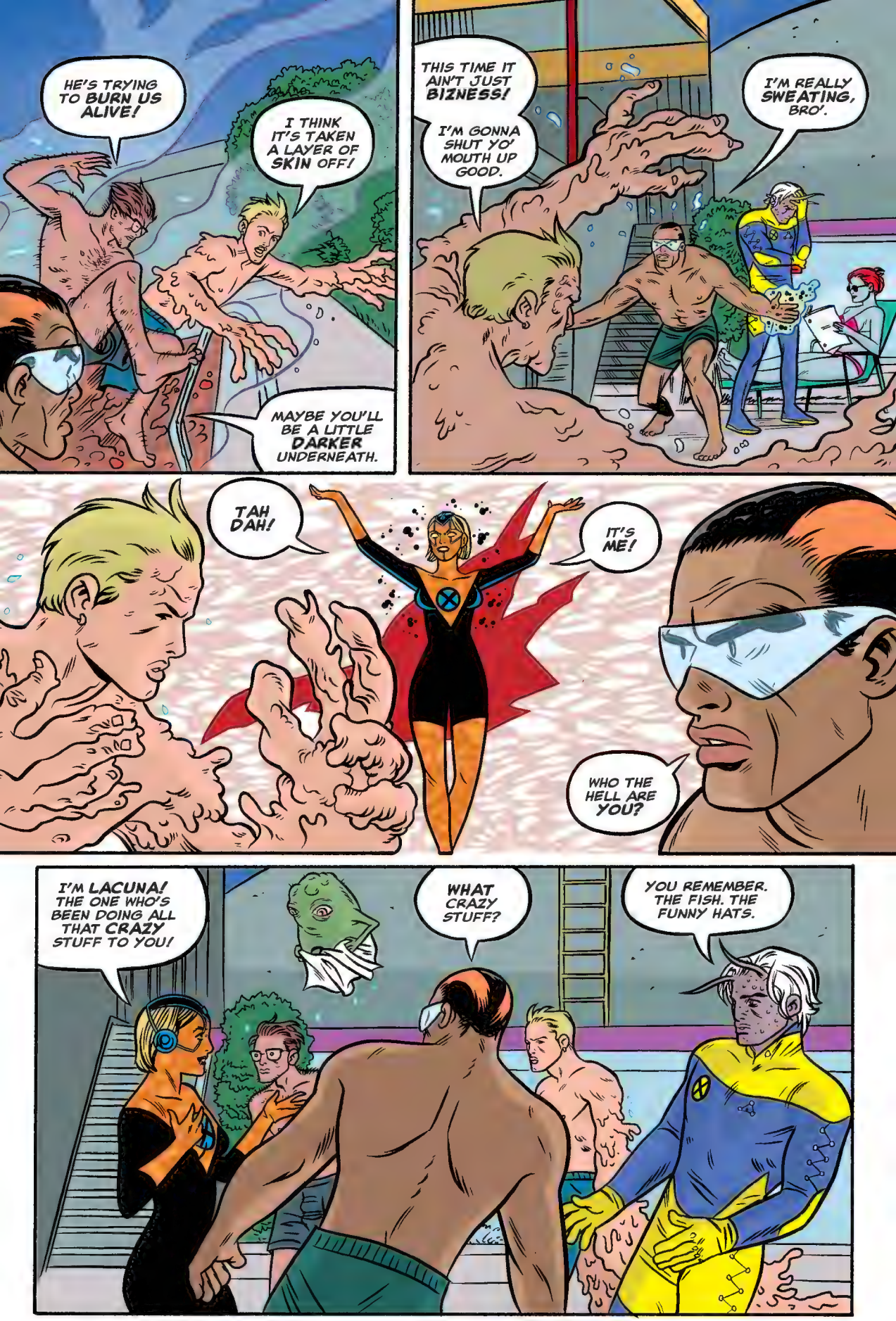
THAT'S NOT THE POINT, MR. FREEMAN.
CALL ME SPIKE.
AND IN CASE YOU WONDERED, I'M NOT KEEN ON HAVING THIS GUY AS PART OF THE TEAM JUST BECAUSE OUR NAMES ARE THE SAME.

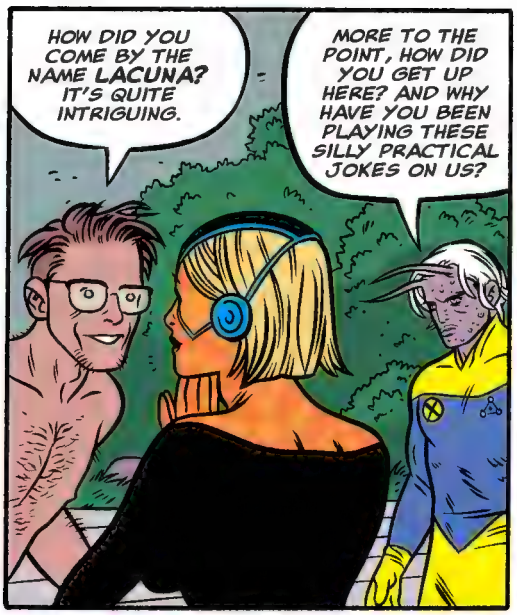
THEN WHY ARE YOU SO KEEN? WE HAD AN AGREEMENT THAT TEAM SELECTION WOULD BE IN OUR HANDS.
I'M GETTING A LOT OF GRIEF OVER THIS. FROM A LOT OF INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE. WE CAN'T AFFORD TO HAVE X-FORCE SEEN AS A RACIST INSTITUTION.

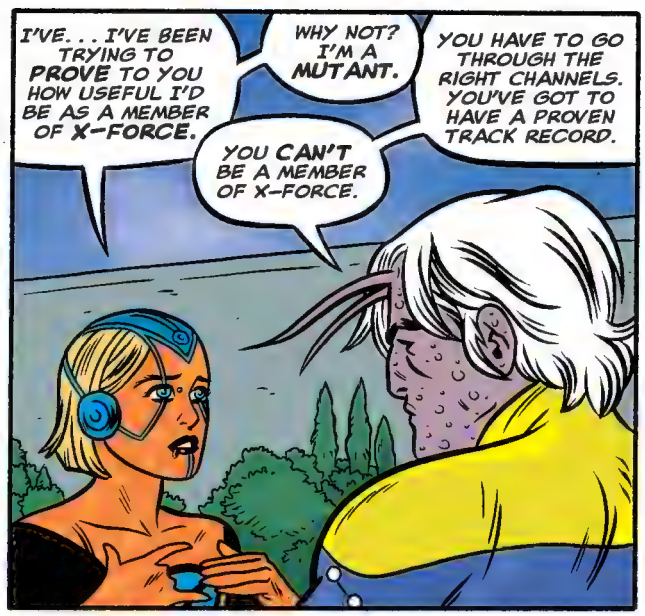

WE AREN'T!
RIGHT, BUT YOU GOTTA BE SEEN NOT TO BE. THE DAYS WHEN A BIG CORPORATION COULD PUT A FEW BLACK PEOPLE ON RECEPTION AND CLAIM THEY WERE WORKING FOR A EGALITARIAN SOCIETY ARE LONG GONE.

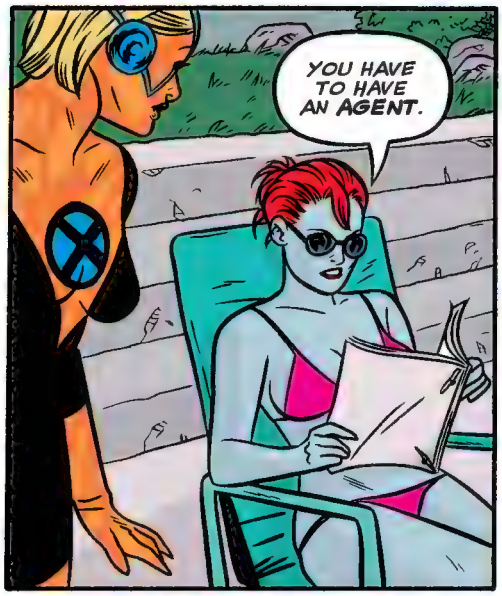
LISTEN, SPIKE. WE RISK OUR LIVES IN THIS JOB. WE HAVE TO DEPEND ON THE GUY NEXT TO US.
THAT MEANS HE OR SHE HAS TO BE THE BEST, REGARDLESS OF COLOR, SEX, CREED OR MUTATION.

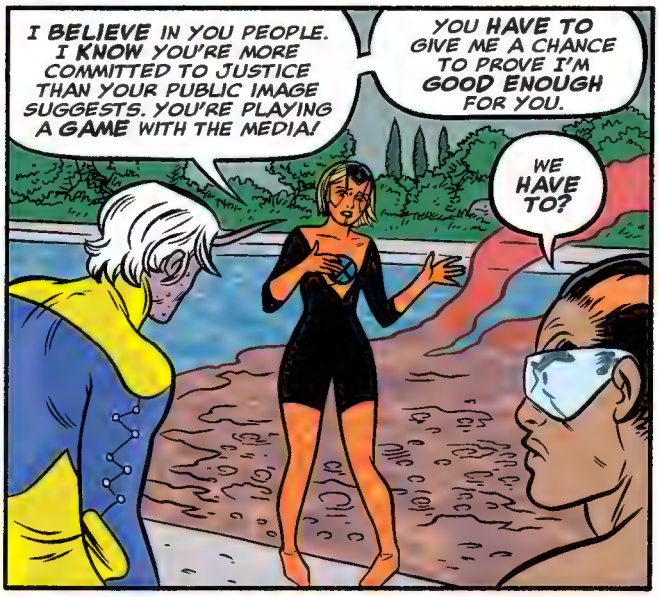

PERSONALLY, I THINK WE SHOULD BRING HIM IN. MAYBE FOR A TRIAL PERIOD.
THAT IS THE MOST HALF-ASSED THING I'VE EVER HEARD. TRIAL PERIOD? WE'RE CHOOSING A NEW TEAM MEMBER—NOT BUYING A VACUUM CLEANER.
IF YOU DON'T ME SAYING, YOU DO SEEM TO HAVE AN IRRATIONAL PROBLEM WITH THIS SPIKE CHARACTER.
I THINK TIKE'S RUNNING SCARED.
STICK TO YOUR BOOKS, MYLES.
AND PHAT, I MIGHT GIVE A DAMN ABOUT WHAT YOU THINK—WHEN YOU STOP BEING A WHITE BOY WHO WISHES HE WAS BLACK.
OR WHEN YOU STOP BEING A BLACK MAN WHO WISHES HE WAS WHITE.
TOUCHÉ.


HE'S TRYING TO BURN US ALIVE!
I THINK IT'S TAKEN A LAYER OF SKIN OFF!
MAYBE YOU'LL BE A LITTLE DARKER UNDERNEATH.
THIS TIME IT AIN'T JUST BIZNESS!
I'M GONNA SHUT YO' MOUTH UP GOOD.
I'M REALLY SWEATING, BRO'.
TAH DAH!
IT'S ME!
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
I'M LACUNA! THE ONE WHO'S BEEN DOING ALL THAT CRAZY STUFF TO YOU!
WHAT CRAZY STUFF?
YOU REMEMBER. THE FISH. THE FUNNY HATS.


HOW DID YOU COME BY THE NAME LACUNA? IT'S QUITE INTRIGUING.
MORE TO THE POINT, HOW DID YOU GET UP HERE? AND WHY HAVE YOU BEEN PLAYING THESE SILLY PRACTICAL JOKES ON US?

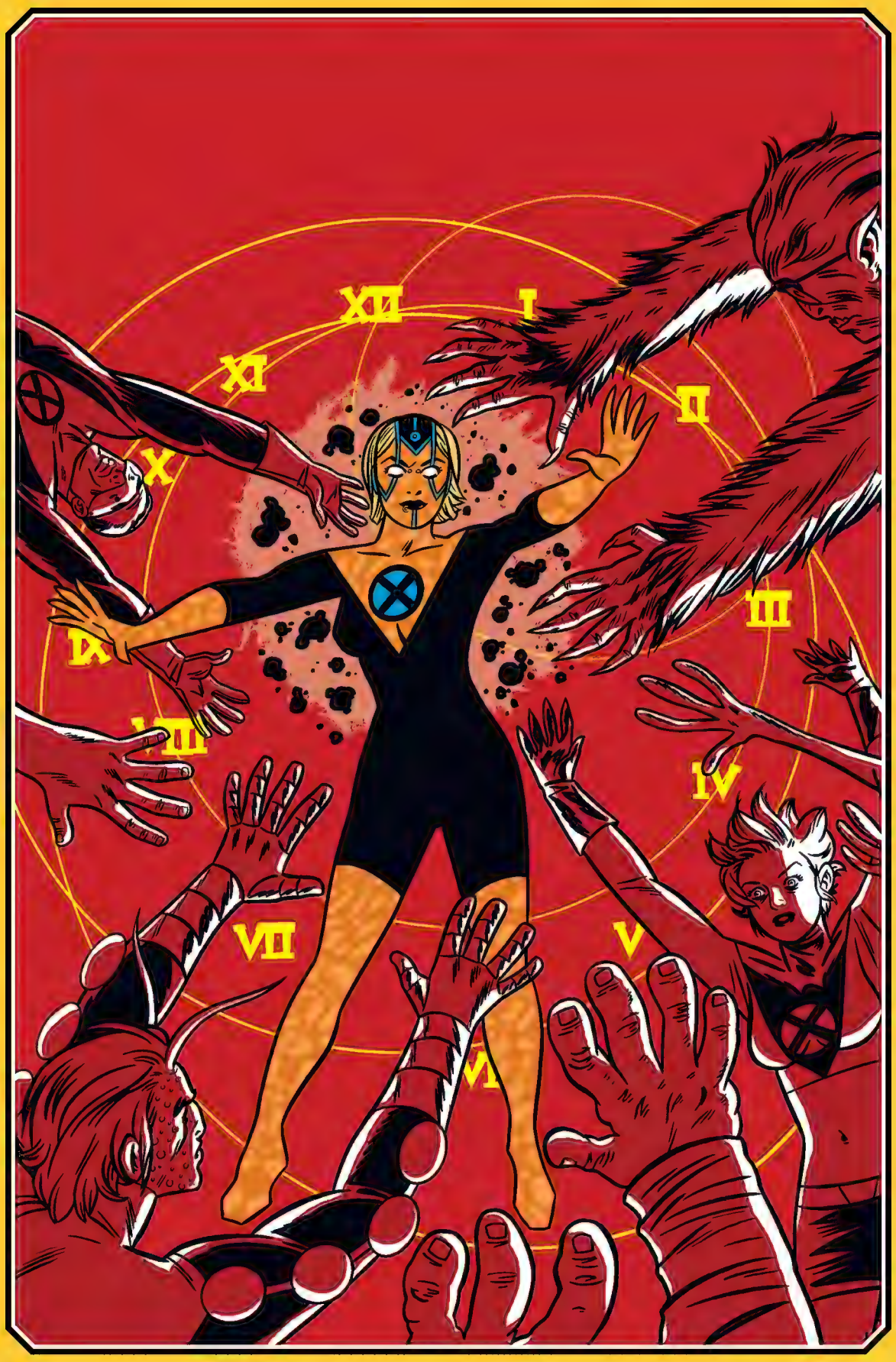

I'VE... I'VE BEEN TRYING TO PROVE TO YOU HOW USEFUL I'D BE AS A MEMBER OF X-FORCE.
WHY NOT? I'M A MUTANT.
YOU HAVE TO GO THROUGH THE RIGHT CHANNELS. YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE A PROVEN TRACK RECORD.
YOU CAN'T BE A MEMBER OF X-FORCE.


YOU HAVE TO HAVE AN AGENT.


I BELIEVE IN YOU PEOPLE. I KNOW YOU'RE MORE COMMITTED TO JUSTICE THAN YOUR PUBLIC IMAGE SUGGESTS. YOU'RE PLAYING A GAME WITH THE MEDIA!
YOU HAVE TO GIVE ME A CHANCE TO PROVE I'M GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOU.
WE HAVE TO?

IF YOU SAY NO...
IF YOU SAY NO, I'LL THROW MYSELF INTO THIS BOILING WATER, AND YOU'LL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR MY DEATH!

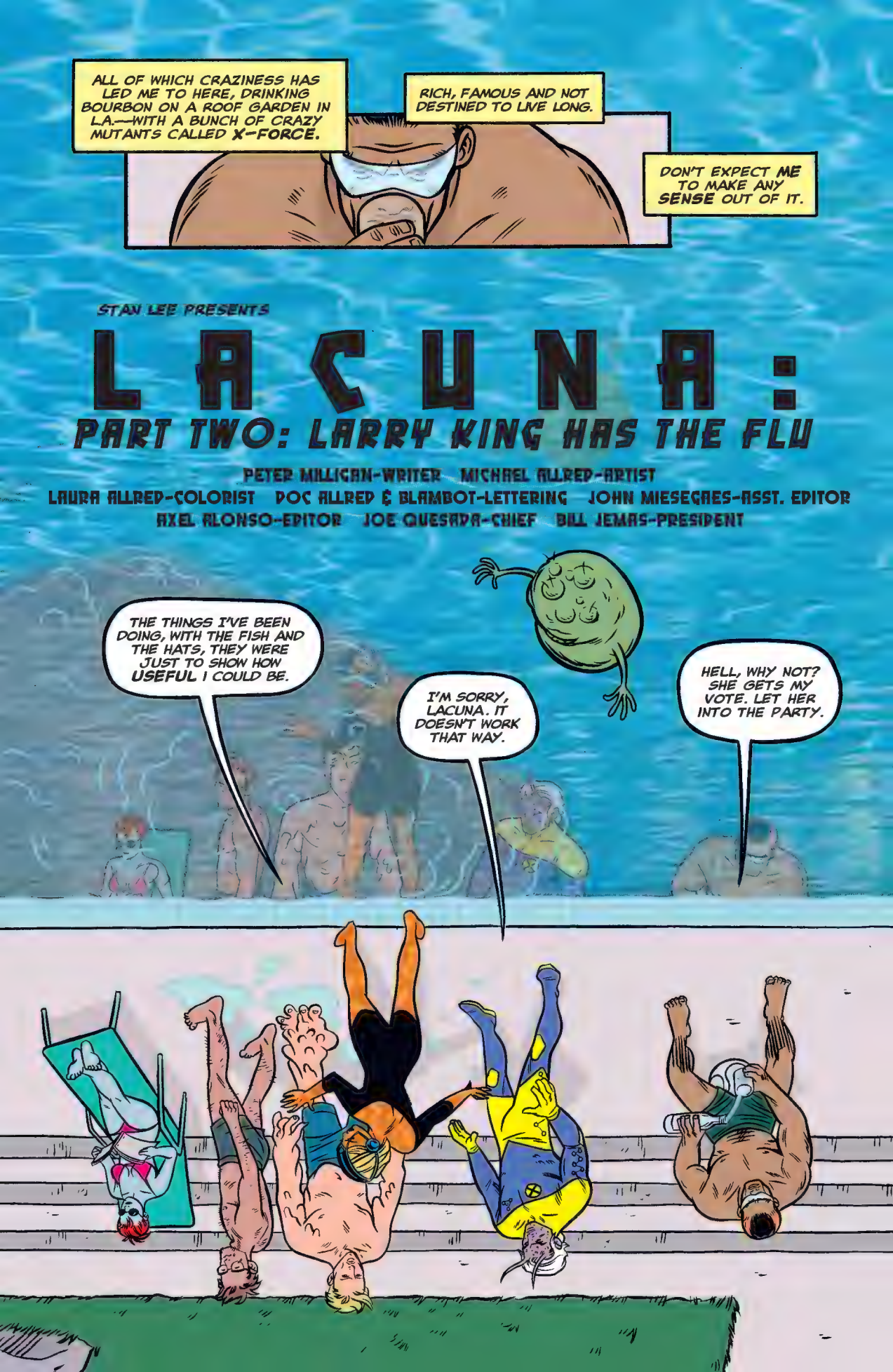
NO?

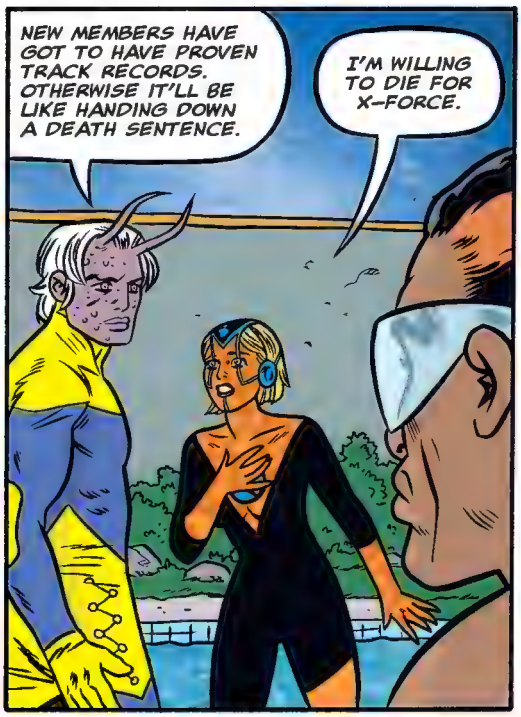


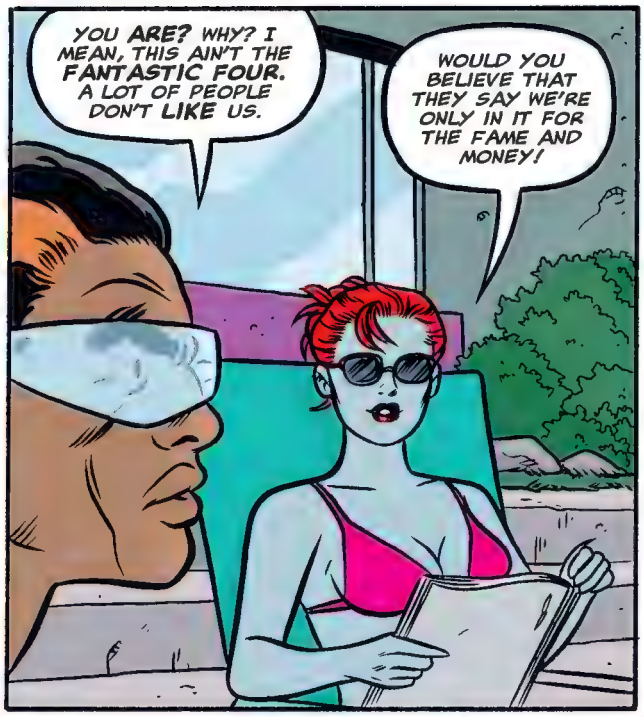
X-FORCE #122

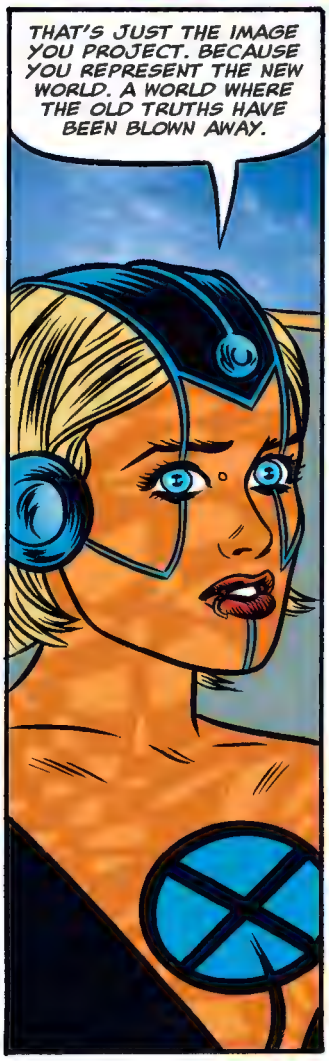
SO THERE WAS THIS LITTLE KID WHO LIVED WAY UP NORTH WHERE THE WINTERS WERE LONG AND VERY VERY WHITE.
AND I MEAN WHITE.
HEY, TIKE, YOU'RE SMUDGING THE SNOW, MAN!
YOUR COLOR'S COMING OFF!

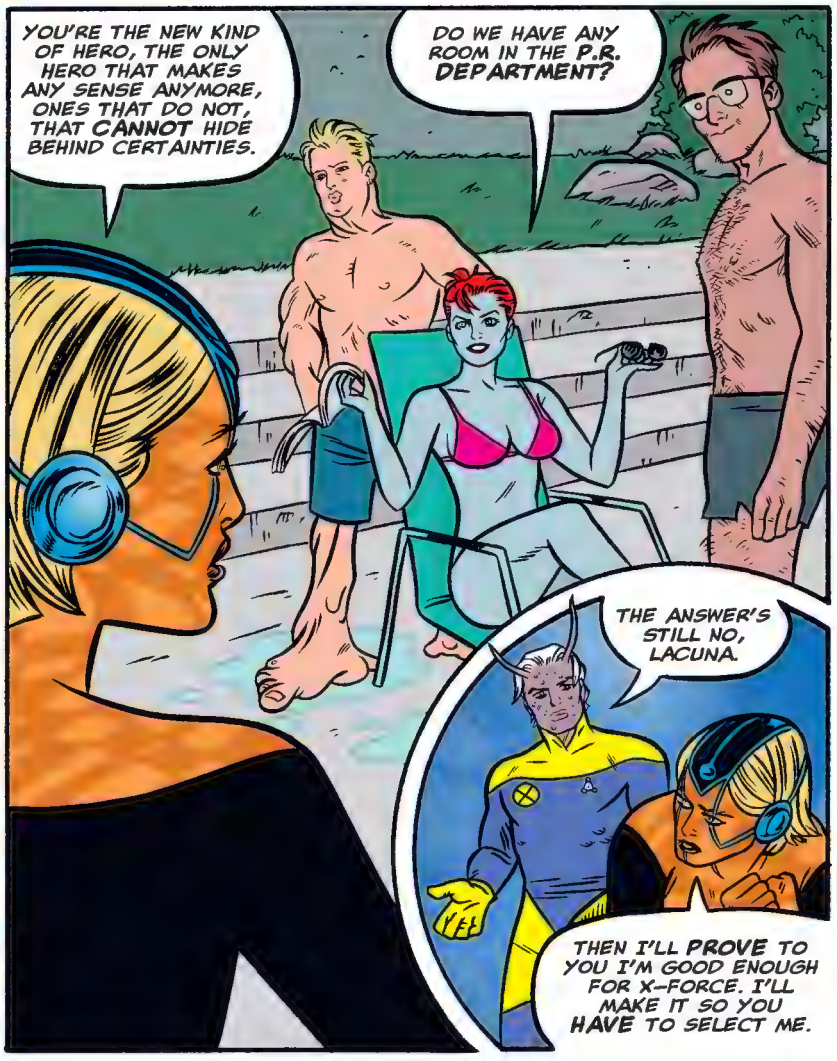
SO THIS DUMB LITTLE KID STARTS WASHING HIS HANDS, REAL HARD—UNTIL THEY'RE RAW—TO SEE WHETHER HE CAN WASH HIS COLOR AWAY.
MAYBE UNDERNEATH HE WAS SNOW WHITE, LIKE EVERY OTHER DAMN THING UP THERE.
HIS PARENTS DIDN'T CARE THAT THEIR ADOPTED SON WAS DIFFERENT THAN THE OTHER KIDS. MAYBE THEY EVEN LOVED HIM MORE BECAUSE OF IT.
BUT WHEN HIS SWEAT-THING STARTED KICKING IN, WELL, THAT WAS A WHOLE OTHER BALL GAME.
I GUESS IT WAS JUST ONE DIFFERENCE TOO MANY FOR THEM.


ALL OF WHICH CRAZINESS HAS LED ME TO HERE, DRINKING BOURBON ON A ROOF GARDEN IN L.A.—WITH A BUNCH OF CRAZY MUTANTS CALLED X-FORCE.
RICH, FAMOUS AND NOT DESTINED TO LIVE LONG.
DON'T EXPECT ME TO MAKE ANY SENSE OUT OF IT.
STAN LEE PRESENTS
LACUNA:
PART TWO: LARRY KING HAS THE FLU
PETER MILLIGAN-WRITER MICHAEL ALLRED-ARTIST
LAURA ALLRED-COLORIST DOC ALLRED & BLAMBOT-LETTERING JOHN MIESEGAES-ASST. EDITOR
AXEL ALONSO-EDITOR JOE QUESADA-CHIEF BILL JEMAS-PRESIDENT
THE THINGS I'VE BEEN DOING, WITH THE FISH AND THE HATS, THEY WERE JUST TO SHOW HOW USEFUL I COULD BE.
I'M SORRY, LACUNA. IT DOESN'T WORK THAT WAY.
HELL, WHY NOT? SHE GETS MY VOTE. LET HER INTO THE PARTY.

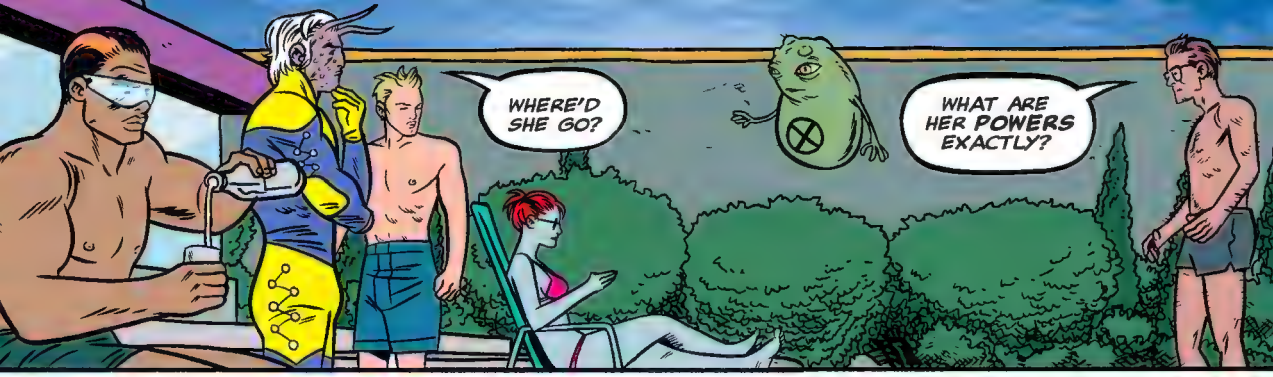

NEW MEMBERS HAVE GOT TO HAVE PROVEN TRACK RECORDS. OTHERWISE IT'LL BE LIKE HANDING DOWN A DEATH SENTENCE.
I'M WILLING TO DIE FOR X-FORCE.

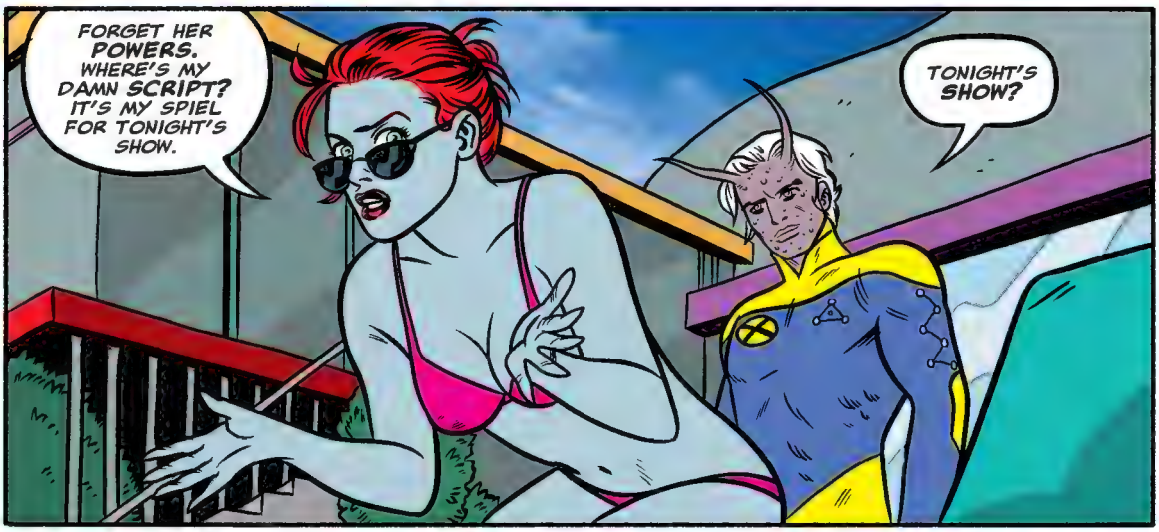

YOU ARE? WHY? I MEAN, THIS AIN'T THE FANTASTIC FOUR. A LOT OF PEOPLE DON'T LIKE US.
WOULD YOU BELIEVE THAT THEY SAY WE'RE ONLY IN IT FOR THE FAME AND MONEY!

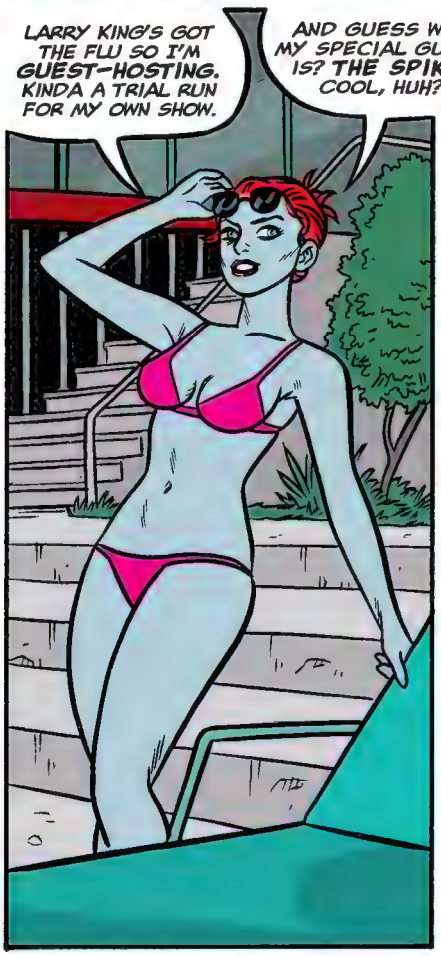

THAT'S JUST THE IMAGE YOU PROJECT. BECAUSE YOU REPRESENT THE NEW WORLD. A WORLD WHERE THE OLD TRUTHS HAVE BEEN BLOWN AWAY.

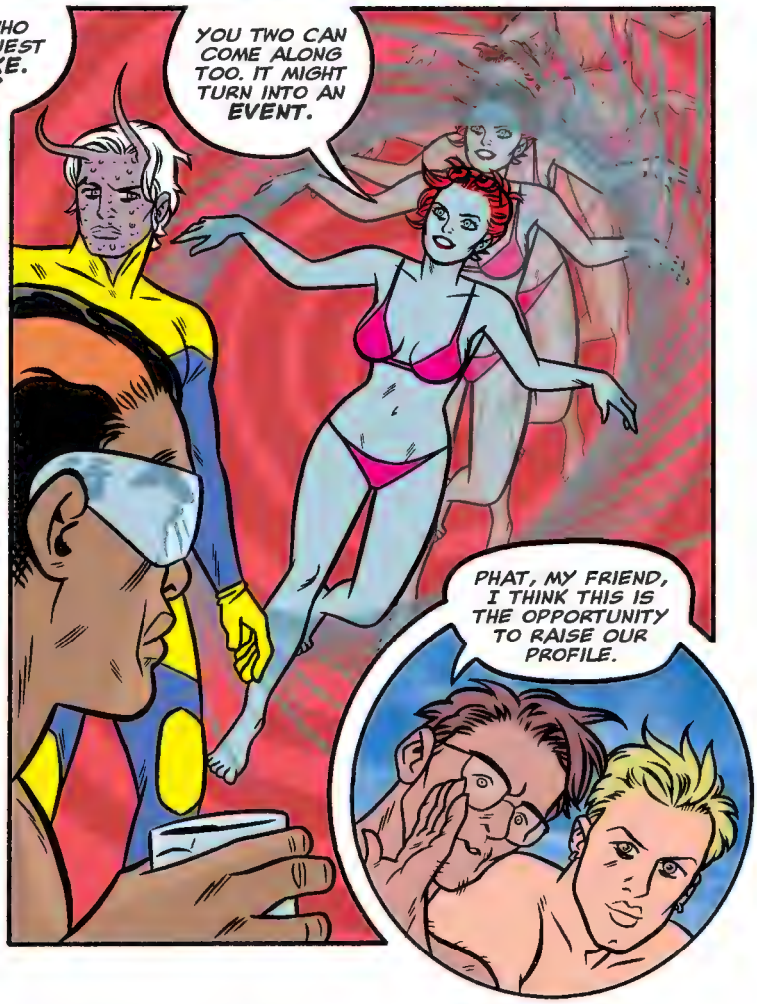

YOU'RE THE NEW KIND OF HERO, THE ONLY HERO THAT MAKES ANY SENSE ANYMORE, ONES THAT DO NOT, THAT CANNOT HIDE BEHIND CERTAINTIES.
DO WE HAVE ANY ROOM IN THE P.R. DEPARTMENT?
THE ANSWER'S STILL NO, LACUNA.
THEN I'LL PROVE TO YOU I'M GOOD ENOUGH FOR X-FORCE. I'LL MAKE IT SO YOU HAVE TO SELECT ME.

IDIOT! WHY DID YOU HAVE TO BABBLE ON LIKE THAT? ALL THAT HALF-BAKED STUFF ABOUT CERTAINTIES AND HEROES.
THESE GUYS KNOW ALL THAT ALREADY. BUT THE TRICK IS TO PRETEND IT'S SOMETHING ELSE.
THE TRICK IS TO BE IRONIC AND LIGHT AND COOL.
I'VE GOT TO BE MORE COOL LIKE HER. EDIE SAWYER.
I MUST SAY, I DON'T LIKE HER. I WONDER IF SHE'S THE WEAK LINK IN THE TEAM? STARTED TO BELIEVE HER PUBLICITY.
I KNOW THIS IS CHILDISH, BUT SO WHAT?
I'D KINDA LIKE TO KISS HIM, RIGHT NOW. HE STOOD UP FOR ME. I'VE NEVER KISSED A BLACK MAN BEFORE.
GET A GRIP, WOODSTOCK! YOU'RE BEHAVING LIKE A STARSTRUCK SCHOOLGIRL! THIS IS SERIOUS BUSINESS.
THIS IS YOUR TIME.

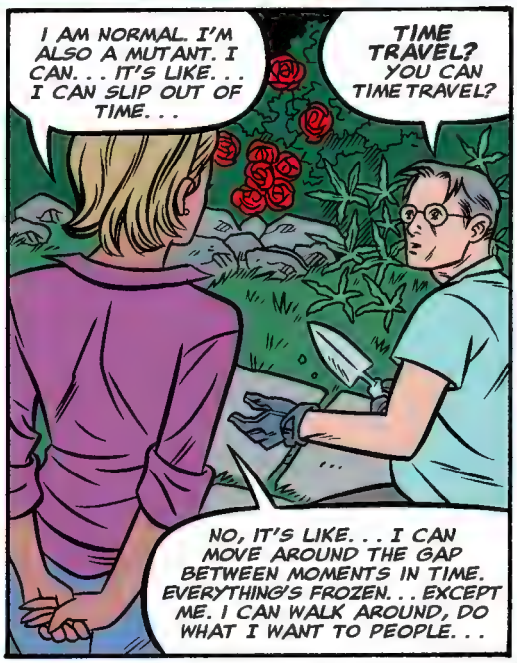

WHERE'D SHE GO?
WHAT ARE HER POWERS EXACTLY?


FORGET HER POWERS. WHERE'S MY DAMN SCRIPT? IT'S MY SPIEL FOR TONIGHT'S SHOW.
TONIGHT'S SHOW?


LARRY KING'S GOT THE FLU SO I'M GUEST-HOSTING. KINDA A TRIAL RUN FOR MY OWN SHOW.
AND GUESS WHO MY SPECIAL GUEST IS? THE SPIKE. COOL, HUH?


YOU TWO CAN COME ALONG TOO. IT MIGHT TURN INTO AN EVENT.
PHAT, MY FRIEND, I THINK THIS IS THE OPPORTUNITY TO RAISE OUR PROFILE.

A MUTANT?
YOU SEEM LIKE A PERFECTLY NORMAL YOUNG WOMAN.
HOW... EXACTLY DOES THIS... MANIFEST ITSELF?

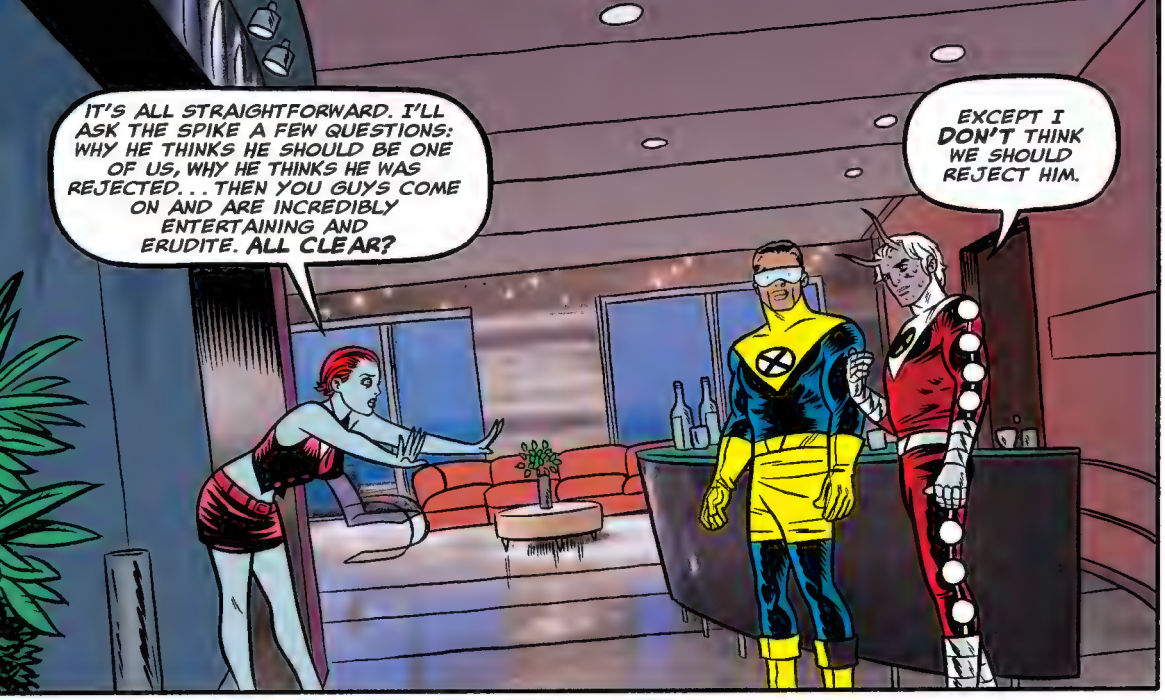

I AM NORMAL. I'M ALSO A MUTANT. I CAN... IT'S LIKE... I CAN SLIP OUT OF TIME...
TIME TRAVEL? YOU CAN TIME TRAVEL?
NO, IT'S LIKE... I CAN MOVE AROUND THE GAP BETWEEN MOMENTS IN TIME. EVERYTHING'S FROZEN... EXCEPT ME. I CAN WALK AROUND, DO WHAT I WANT TO PEOPLE...

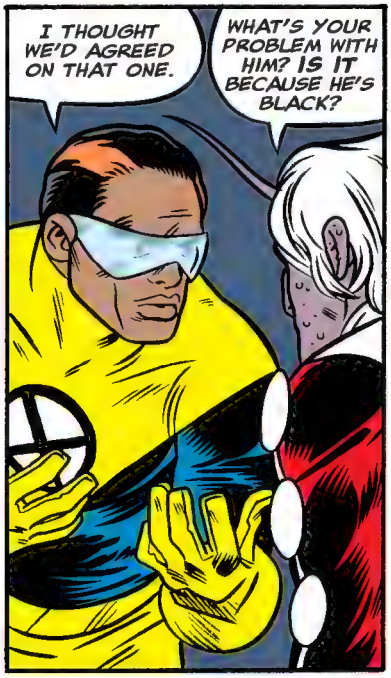
I'M ONLY TELLING YOU THIS BECAUSE I'M GOING PUBLIC TONIGHT. ON THE LARRY KING SHOW. ONLY LARRY KING WONT BE THERE.
WHY NOT?
HE'S GOT THE FLU.

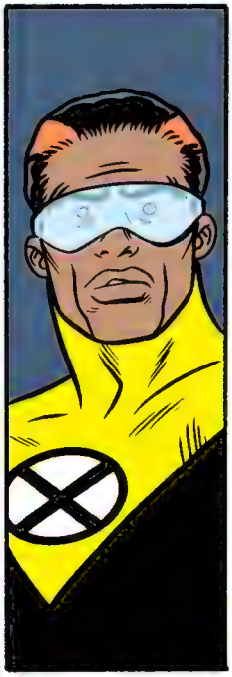
I'D UNDERSTAND IF THIS FREAKS YOU OUT. FINDING YOU'VE GOT A MUTANT IN THE FAMILY. IT CAN'T BE EASY.

I THINK IT'S GREAT!
ME TOO! WAIT UNTIL I TELL MARTHA.

MAN! WHY DO THEY ALWAYS HAVE TO BE SO UNDERSTANDING?
WHY CAN'T THEY BE JUST A LITTLE BIGOTED?


IT'S ALL STRAIGHTFORWARD. I'LL ASK THE SPIKE A FEW QUESTIONS: WHY HE THINKS HE SHOULD BE ONE OF US, WHY HE THINKS HE WAS REJECTED... THEN YOU GUYS COME ON AND ARE INCREDIBLY ENTERTAINING AND ERUDITE. ALL CLEAR?
EXCEPT I DON'T THINK WE SHOULD REJECT HIM.

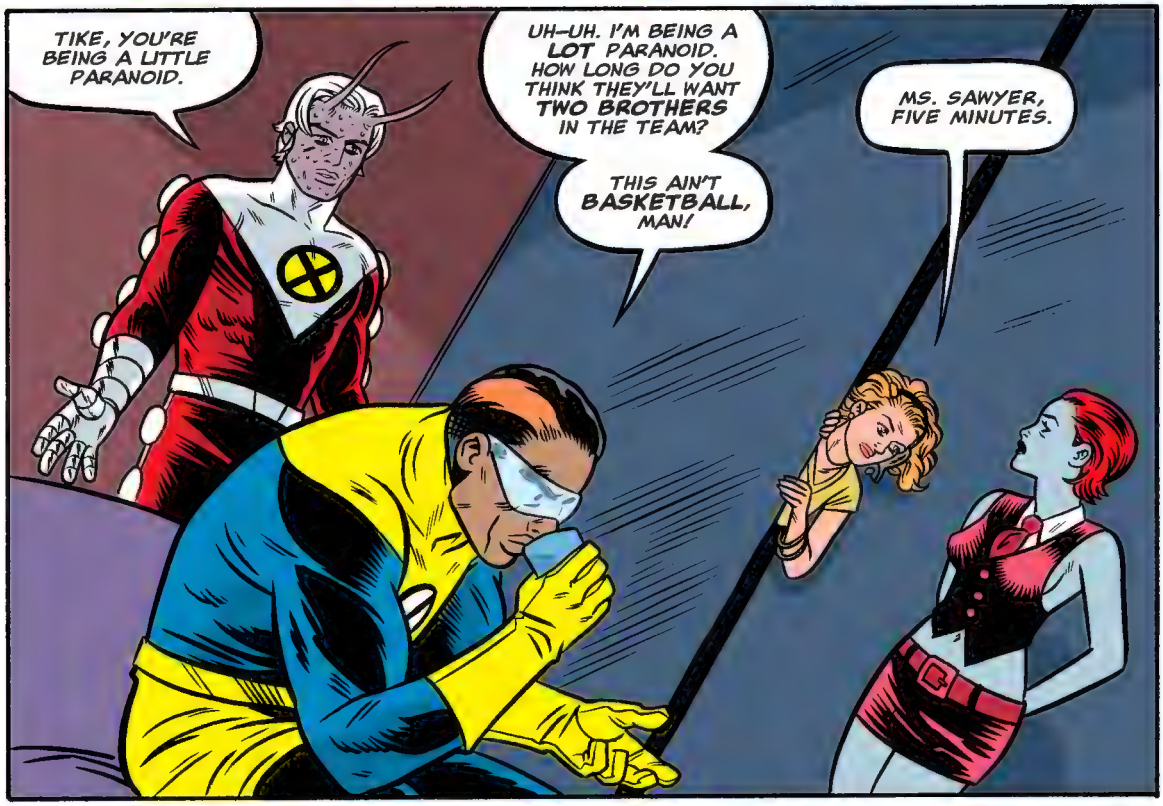

I THOUGHT WE'D AGREED ON THAT ONE.
WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM WITH HIM? IS IT BECAUSE HE'S BLACK?



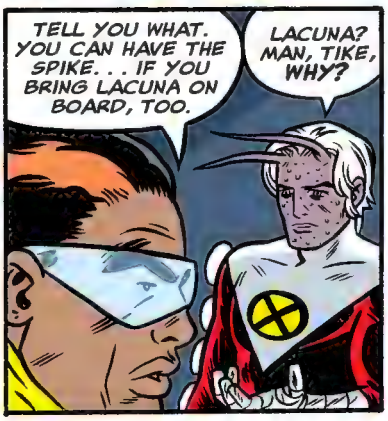
YEAH.
WOW. COULD YOU SAY THAT ON TV— IT'LL BE SENSATIONAL!
WHAT'S THE COLOR OF HIS SKIN GOT TO DO WITH WHETHER HE CAN CUT IT IN X-FORCE?

ALL RIGHT. YOU WANNA KNOW THE TRUTH? THE REAL REASON WHY I DON'T WANT HIM ON THE TEAM? BECAUSE I KNOW WHAT'LL HAPPEN.
WHAT'S THAT?
I'LL BE KILLED OFF.

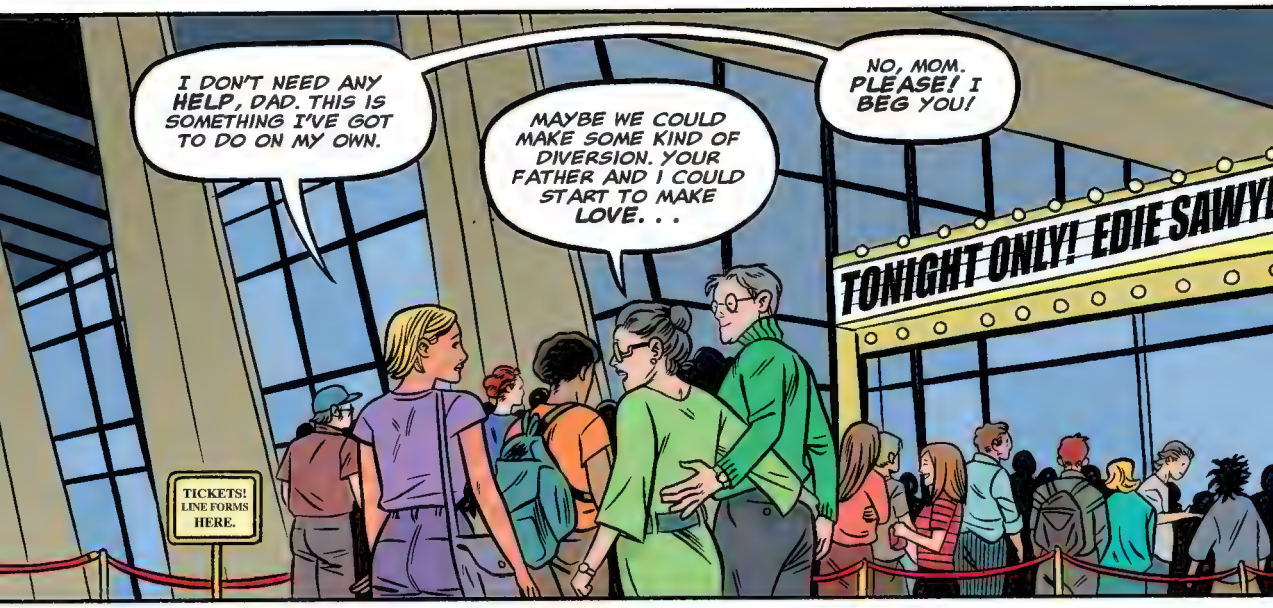
THAT'S WHAT ALWAYS HAPPENS IN THESE SET-UPS! A NEW BROTHER JOINS UP AND, HEY, THE POOR BROTHER THAT'S ALREADY IN THE TEAM BETTER NOT START READING ANY LONG NOVELS!


TIKE, YOU'RE BEING A LITTLE PARANOID.
UH-UH. I'M BEING A LOT PARANOID. HOW LONG DO YOU THINK THEY'LL WANT TWO BROTHERS IN THE TEAM?
THIS AIN'T BASKETBALL, MAN!
MS. SAWYER, FIVE MINUTES.

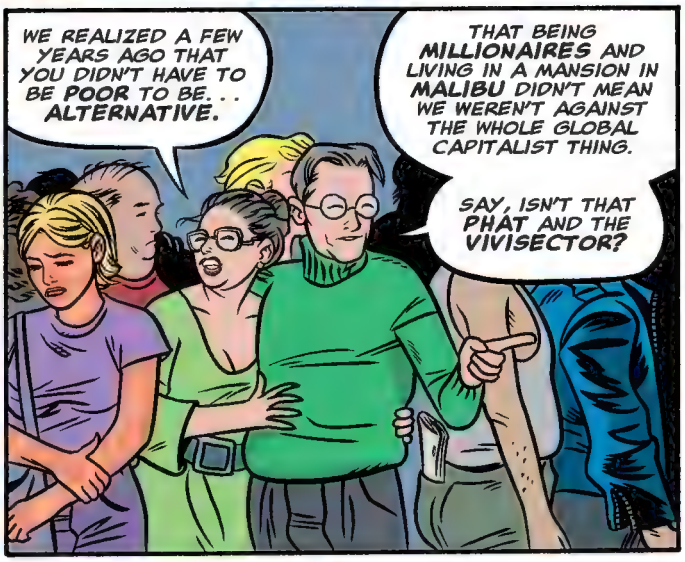
GUYS, CAN WE SAVE SOME OF THIS STUFF FOR THE SHOW? IT'S HOT.

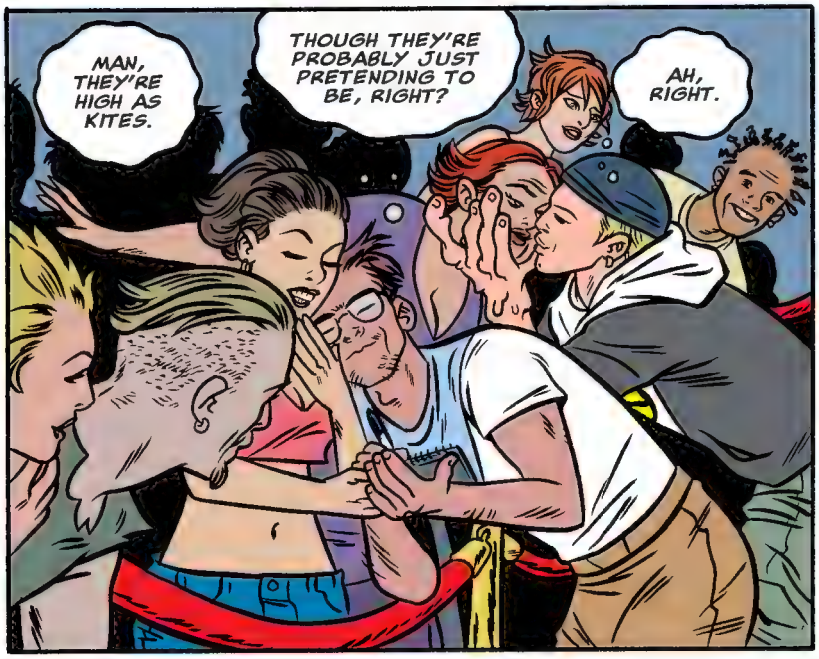

TELL YOU WHAT. YOU CAN HAVE THE SPIKE. . . IF YOU BRING LACUNA ON BOARD, TOO.
LACUNA? MAN, TIKE, WHY?

BECAUSE I THINK SHE LIKES ME. AND SHE'LL BE ON MY SIDE. AND I GOT A FEELING I'M GONNA NEED ALL THE HELP I CAN GET.


I DON'T NEED ANY HELP, DAD. THIS IS SOMETHING I'VE GOT TO DO ON MY OWN.
MAYBE WE COULD MAKE SOME KIND OF DIVERSION. YOUR FATHER AND I COULD START TO MAKE LOVE. . .
NO, MOM. PLEASE! I BEG YOU!
TONIGHT ONLY! EDIE SAWYI
TICKETS! LINE FORMS HERE.

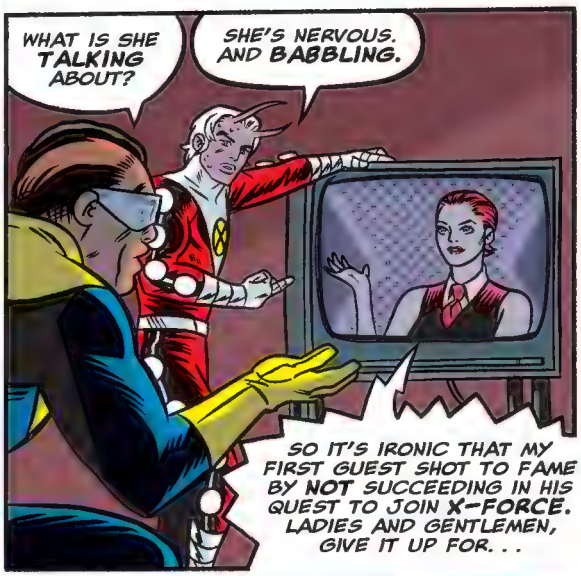
IT'S JUST THAT WE'RE SO PROUD, WOODSTOCK. I MEAN, NOW THAT YOU'VE EXPLAINED THAT X-FORCE ARE ONLY PRETENDING TO BE PART OF THE SYSTEM. . . BUT ARE ACTUALLY AGAINST IT, WE REALLY DIG THE IDEA OF YOU JOINING THEM.
IN MANY WAYS, YOU'RE FOLLOWING IN OUR FOOTSTEPS.

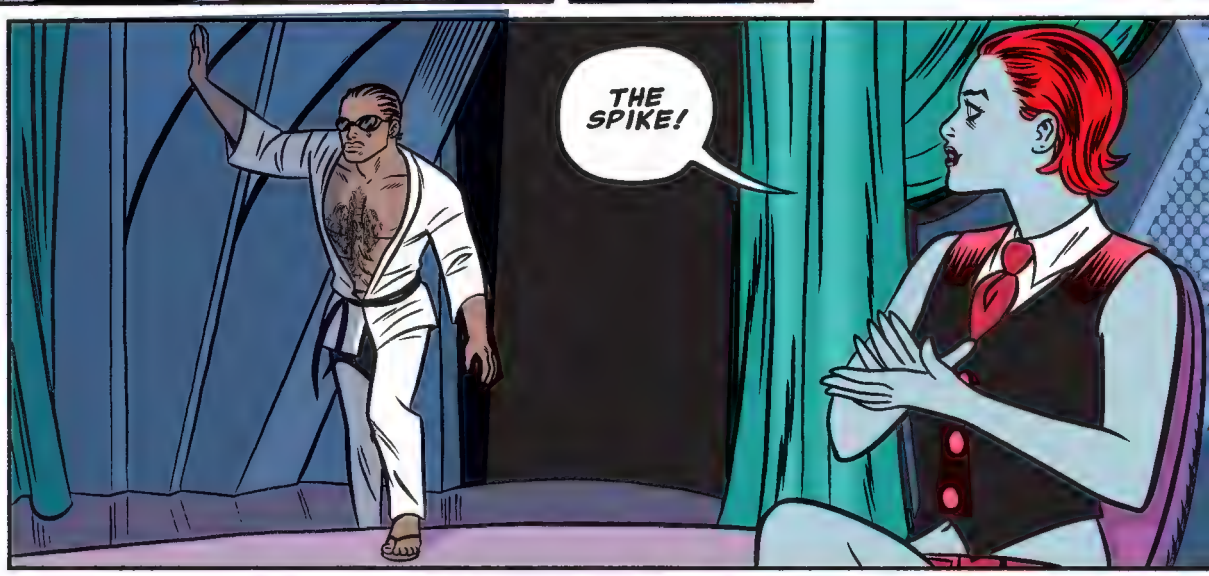

WE REALIZED A FEW YEARS AGO THAT YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO BE POOR TO BE. . . ALTERNATIVE.
THAT BEING MILLIONAIRES AND LIVING IN A MANSION IN MALIBU DIDN'T MEAN WE WEREN'T AGAINST THE WHOLE GLOBAL CAPITALIST THING.
SAY, ISN'T THAT PHAT AND THE VIVISECTOR?


MAN, THEY'RE HIGH AS KITES.
THOUGH THEY'RE PROBABLY JUST PRETENDING TO BE, RIGHT?
AH, RIGHT.

I THINK THIS IS GOING TO BE SOME SHOW.

WE AMERICANS LIKE SUCCESS. AND WE'RE SCARED OF FAILURE. WE TREAT IT A LITTLE LIKE THE FLU THAT HAS SO SADLY LAID YOUR USUAL HOST LOW. WE DON'T WANT TO GET TOO CLOSE TO IT IN CASE IT'S INFECTIOUS.


WHAT IS SHE TALKING ABOUT?
SHE'S NERVOUS. AND BABBLING.
SO IT'S IRONIC THAT MY FIRST GUEST SHOT TO FAME BY NOT SUCCEEDING IN HIS QUEST TO JOIN X-FORCE. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, GIVE IT UP FOR. . .


THE SPIKE!

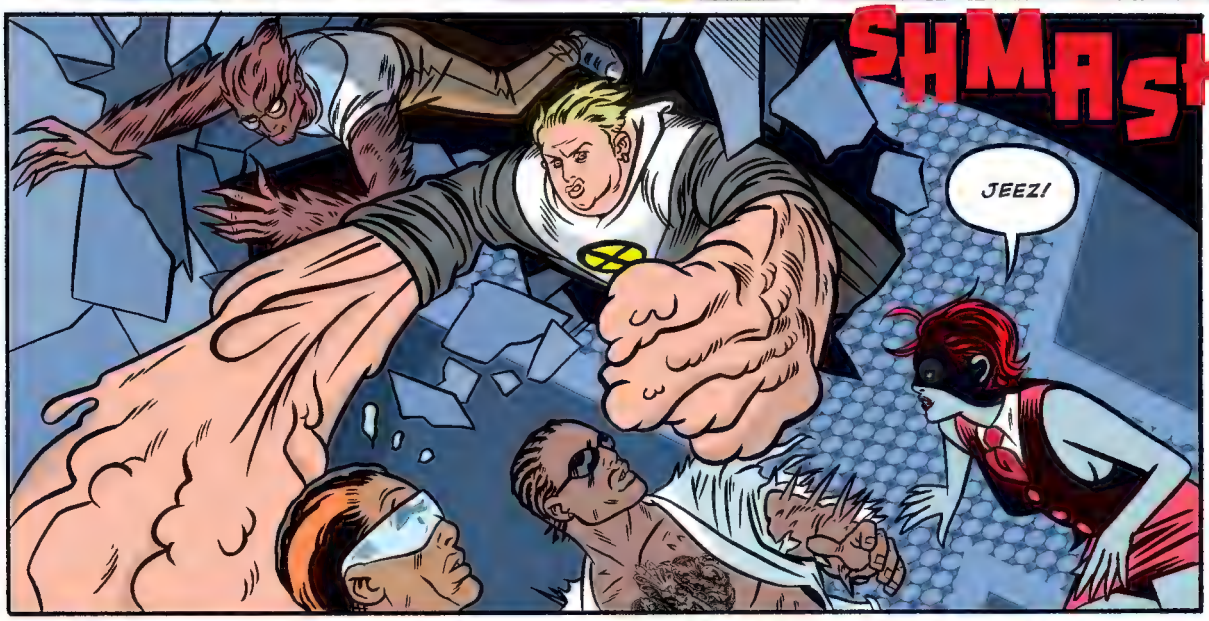
I THINK HE'S HAD COSMETIC SURGERY. THOSE PECS AIN'T REAL. HE'S PROBABLY ON STEROIDS, TOO.
I THOUGHT WE ALL WERE.

THAT WAS A JOKE. TIKE.
I'VE DECIDED I SHOULD TELL MORE JOKES.

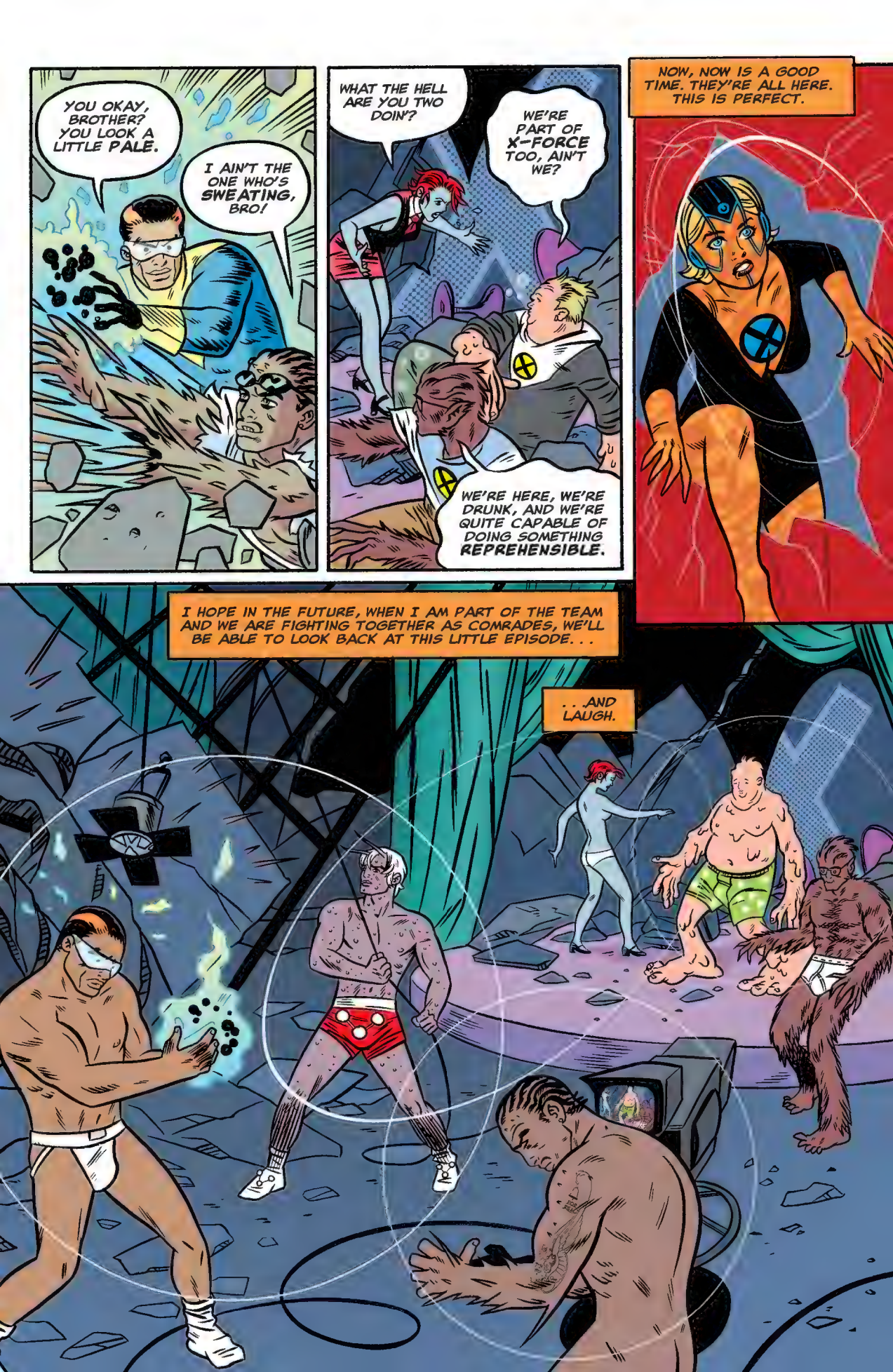
MAYBE IT AIN'T TIKE'S FAULT. HE WAS BROUGHT UP BY WHITE FOLKS, IN A WHITE PART OF THE COUNTRY. HE WAS BROUGHT UP WHITE.
HE MIGHT LOOK BLACK, HE MIGHT ACT BLACK, BUT THAT'S ALL IT IS, AN ACT.

YOU SAYIN' I'M FRONTIN'?

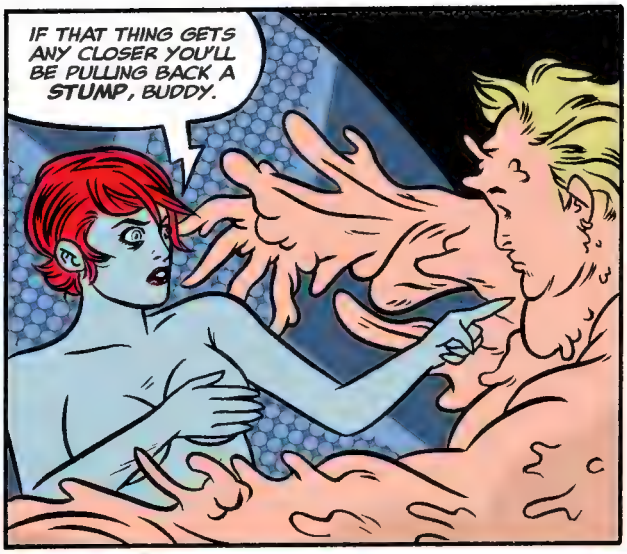
YOU SAYIN' I AIN'T BLACK?
I'M SAYIN' WHAT I'M SAYIN'.
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. . .TIKE ALICAR AND GUY SMITH. . . AKA THE ANARCHIST AND THE ORPHAN. . .

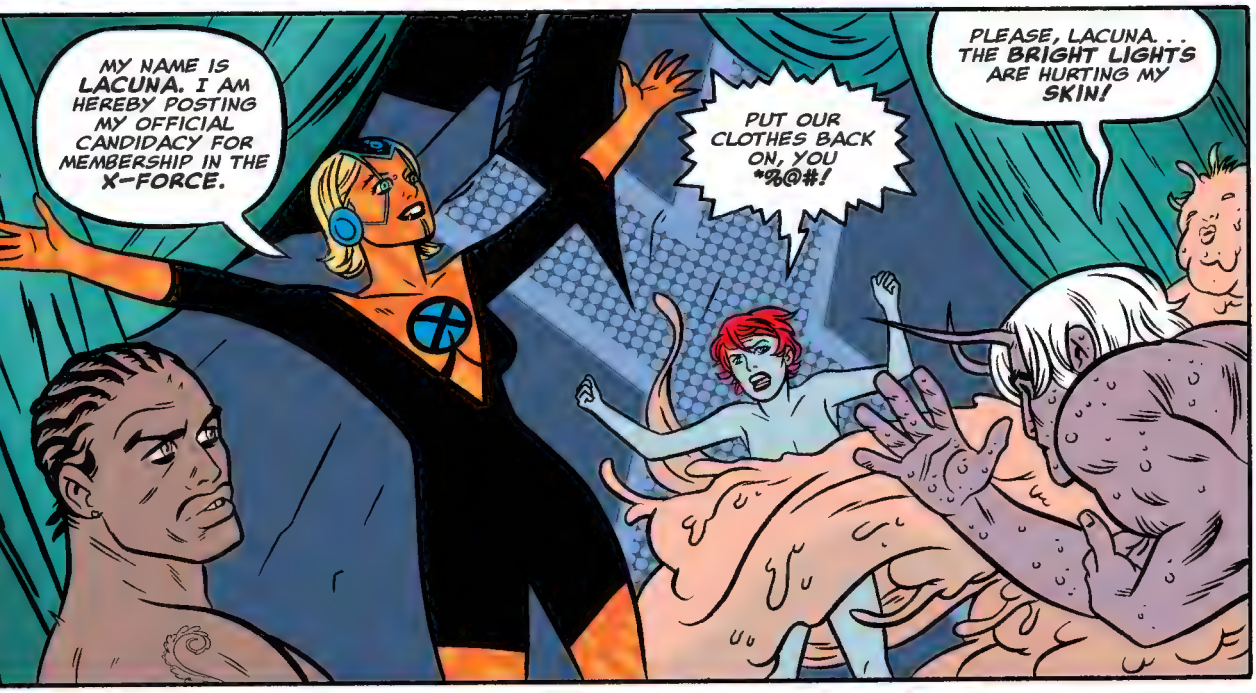

SHMASH
JEEZ!

THE WALL'S COLLAPSING ONTO THE STUDIO AUDIENCE!
I'VE GOT IT!
LEAVE IT TO THE SPIKE!

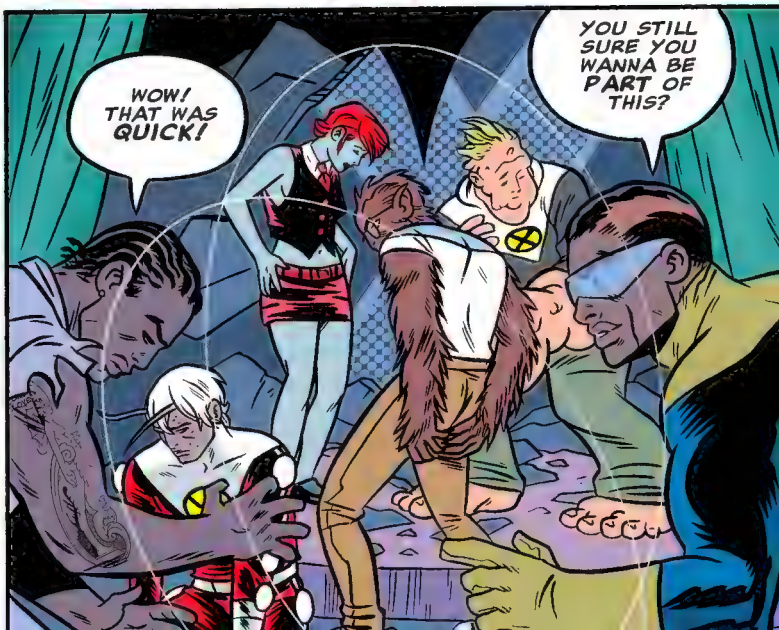

YOU OKAY, BROTHER? YOU LOOK A LITTLE PALE.
I AIN'T THE ONE WHO'S SWEATING, BRO!
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TWO DOIN'?
WE'RE PART OF X-FORCE TOO, AIN'T WE?
WE'RE HERE, WE'RE DRUNK, AND WE'RE QUITE CAPABLE OF DOING SOMETHING REPREHENSIBLE.
NOW, NOW IS A GOOD TIME. THEY'RE ALL HERE. THIS IS PERFECT.
I HOPE IN THE FUTURE, WHEN I AM PART OF THE TEAM AND WE ARE FIGHTING TOGETHER AS COMRADES, WE'LL BE ABLE TO LOOK BACK AT THIS LITTLE EPISODE. . .
. . .AND LAUGH.

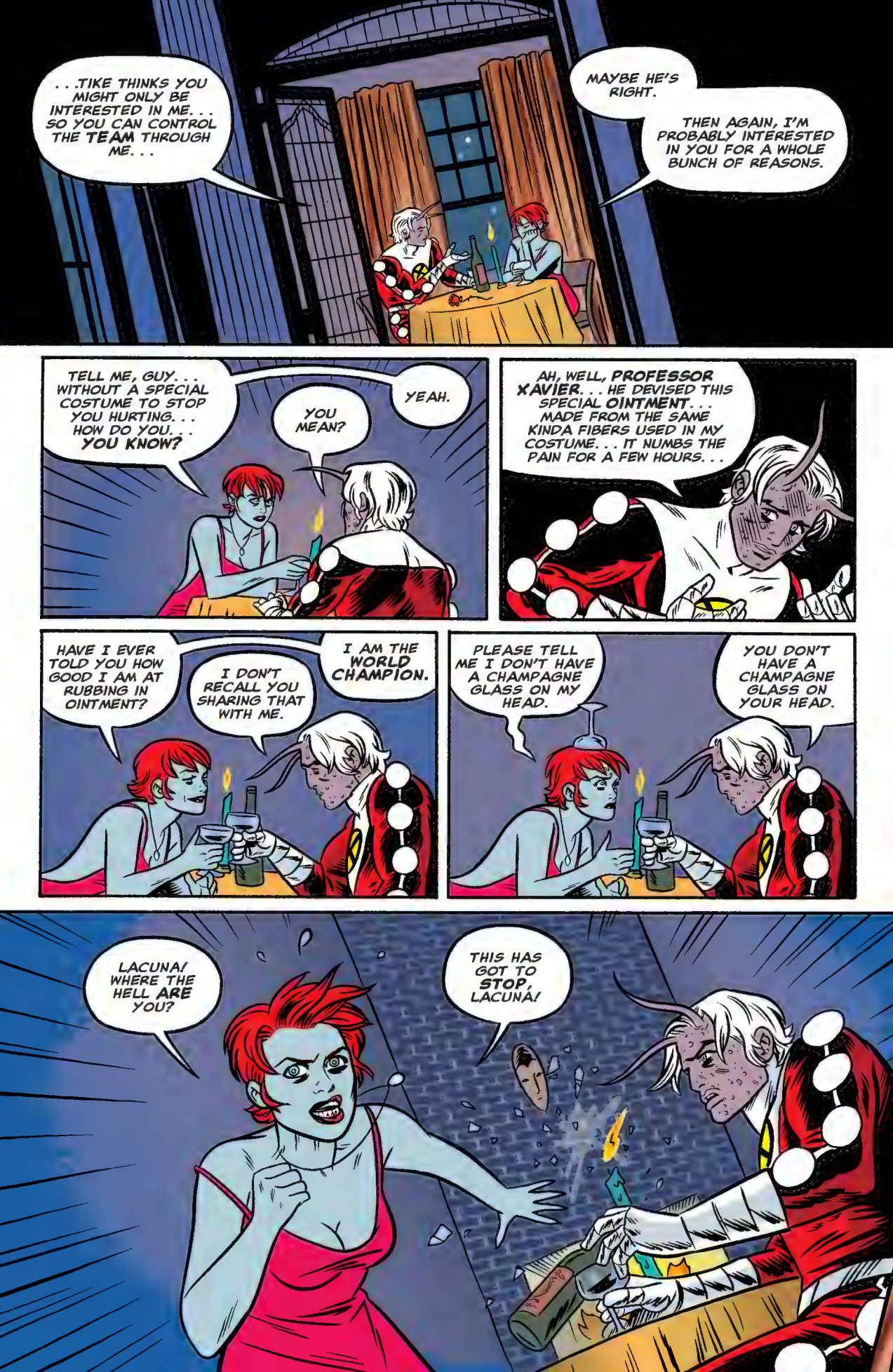
PHAT. . . MAYBE YOU COULD. . . EXPAND A LITTLE AND HIDE OUR EMBARRASSMENT.
RESPECT. . .


IF THAT THING GETS ANY CLOSER YOU'LL BE PULLING BACK A STUMP, BUDDY.


MY NAME IS LACUNA. I AM HEREBY POSTING MY OFFICIAL CANDIDACY FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE X-FORCE.
PUT OUR CLOTHES BACK ON, YOU *%@#!
PLEASE, LACUNA. . . THE BRIGHT LIGHTS ARE HURTING MY SKIN!

THAT'S OUR LITTLE GIRL!
WAY TO GO, WOODSTOCK!
FIGHT THE POWERS THAT BE!


WOW! THAT WAS QUICK!
YOU STILL SURE YOU WANNA BE PART OF THIS?


. . .TIKE THINKS YOU MIGHT ONLY BE INTERESTED IN ME. . . SO YOU CAN CONTROL THE TEAM THROUGH ME. . .
MAYBE HE'S RIGHT.
THEN AGAIN, I'M PROBABLY INTERESTED IN YOU FOR A WHOLE BUNCH OF REASONS.
TELL ME, GUY. . . WITHOUT A SPECIAL COSTUME TO STOP YOU HURTING. . . HOW DO YOU. . . YOU KNOW?
YOU MEAN?
YEAH.
AH, WELL, PROFESSOR XAVIER. . . HE DEVISED THIS SPECIAL OINTMENT. . . MADE FROM THE SAME KINDA FIBERS USED IN MY COSTUME. . . IT NUMBS THE PAIN FOR A FEW HOURS. . .
HAVE I EVER TOLD YOU HOW GOOD I AM AT RUBBING IN OINTMENT?
I DON'T RECALL YOU SHARING THAT WITH ME.
I AM THE WORLD CHAMPION.
PLEASE TELL ME I DON'T HAVE A CHAMPAGNE GLASS ON MY HEAD.
YOU DON'T HAVE A CHAMPAGNE GLASS ON YOUR HEAD.
LACUNA! WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU?
THIS HAS GOT TO STOP, LACUNA!

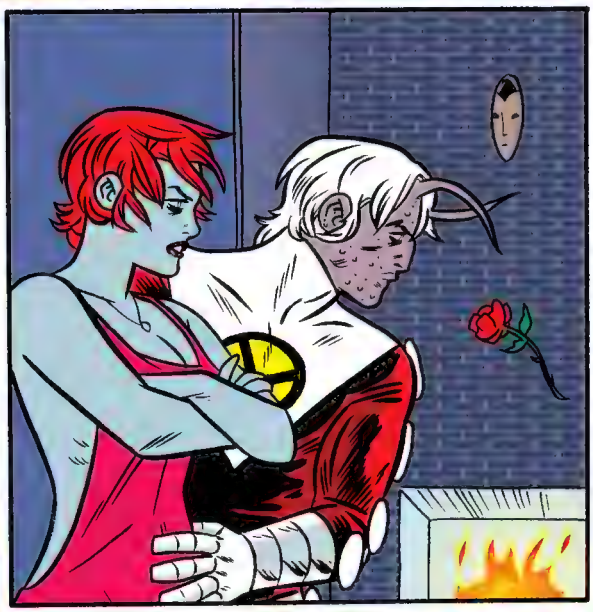
IT WILL ONLY STOP WHEN YOU LET ME INTO THE TEAM. THINK HOW MANY TIMES I COULD HAVE INJURED YOU. THINK HOW USEFUL I COULD BE.

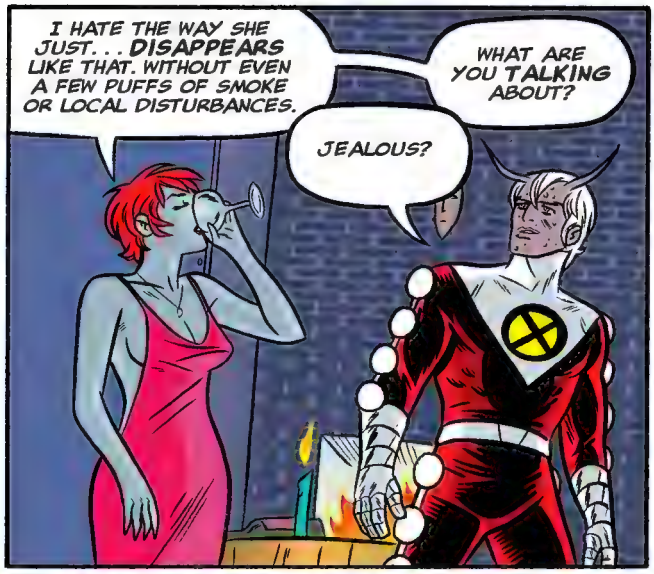
OKAY, NOW I'M GOING TO SHOW YOU HOW EASILY I CAN INJURE YOU.
EDIE, WAIT. MAYBE WE SHOULD RECONSIDER LACUNA'S APPLICATION.

WE'RE ASKING TIKE TO BE FLEXIBLE WHEN IT COMES TO THE SPIKE. MAYBE WE SHOULD BE THE SAME WAY WITH LACUNA. SHE HAS PROVED HOW USEFUL SHE'D BE.
BUT...
SO I VOTE SHE'S IN.

THAT IS SO GREAT!

DON'T THANK ME. IT'S TIKE ALICAR WHO REALLY WANTS YOU IN THE TEAM. IF YOU'RE GOING TO THANK ANYONE, IT SHOULD BE HIM.
TIKE? REALLY? HE WANTED ME IN X-FORCE?




I HATE THE WAY SHE JUST... DISAPPEARS LIKE THAT. WITHOUT EVEN A FEW PUFFS OF SMOKE OR LOCAL DISTURBANCES.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
JEALOUS?

WELL... MAYBE YOU'VE GOT A PROBLEM WITH LACUNA... IN THE SAME WAY THAT TIKE HAD A PROBLEM WITH THE SPIKE.
SHE'S YOUNGER THAN YOU. AND AS YOU SAID, SHE CAN ZOOM IN AND OUT OF PLACES REAL QUICK. DOESN'T SEEM TO GET WIPED OUT AFTERWARDS EITHER.

HAH HAH! THAT WAS A JOKE, EDIE!
I'M NOT LAUGHING.
COME ON, YOU KNOW YOU'RE IRREPLACEABLE!

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.
WHAT ABOUT MY... SPECIAL OINTMENT?

RUB IT ON YOURSELF...
..."MISTER SENSITIVE"!

I HANG A LITTLE WITH THOSE OTHER TWO NUMBSKULLS. FIGURE IT CAN'T DO ANY HARM TO HEDGE MY BETS.

I HAVE A FEELING THAT GUY AND EDIE WILL BE GETTING IT ON SOON, AND THEN WHO KNOWS HOW THIS DELICATE BALANCE OF POWER WILL SHIFT.

I GUESS IT'S ALL SOMETHING OF A **CRAP-SHOOT.**

YOU'VE WON AGAIN.

NO SWEAT!

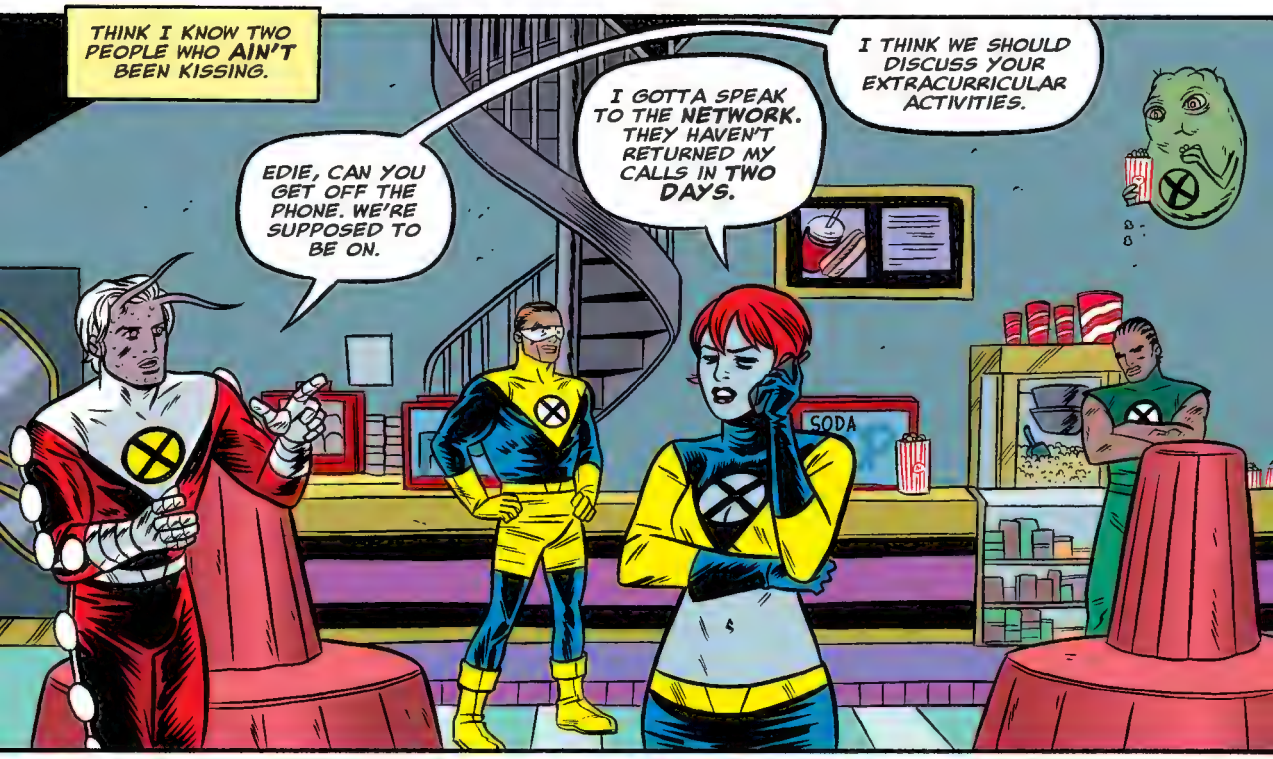
BACK HOME, I PACE AROUND FOR A WHILE BEFORE DOING WHAT I **REALLY** WANT TO DO.

COME ON, MY HANDS ARE PROBABLY FILTHY AFTER HANDLING ALL THOSE **DICE** AND ALL THAT **MONEY!**

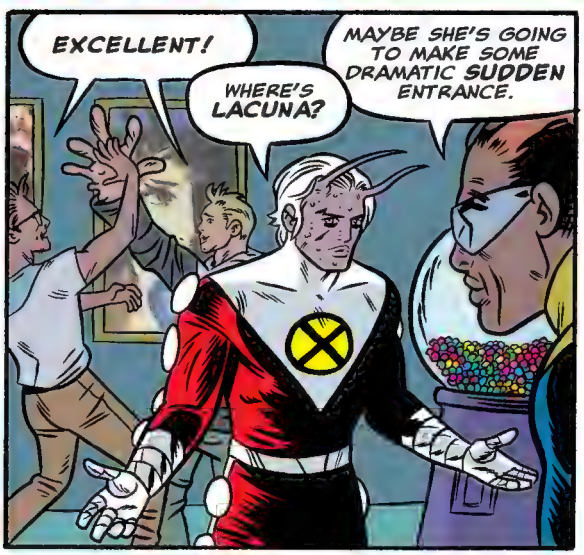
THEN SOMETHING STOPS ME. IT'S WEIRD, A WEIRD FEELING. ON MY **LIPS.**

TINGLING. NOT UNPLEASANT OR ANYTHING BUT DEFINITELY **TINGLING.**

HELL, FEELS LIKE I'VE JUST BEEN **KISSED.**


THINK I KNOW TWO PEOPLE WHO AIN'T BEEN KISSING.
EDIE, CAN YOU GET OFF THE PHONE. WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE ON.
I GOTTA SPEAK TO THE NETWORK. THEY HAVEN'T RETURNED MY CALLS IN TWO DAYS.
I THINK WE SHOULD DISCUSS YOUR EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES.
SODA

DROP DEAD.
SO, GUY, IT'S AGREED: YOU WILL PUBLICALLY REPRIMAND PHAT AND ME FOR OUR OUTRAGEOUS BEHAVIOR.
YEAH, YEAH. IF YOU DON'T FALL IN LINE I WILL TEAR YOU BOTH A NEW BREATHING APPARATUS.


EXCELLENT!
WHERE'S LACUNA?
MAYBE SHE'S GOING TO MAKE SOME DRAMATIC SUDDEN ENTRANCE.

SO. . .HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE PART OF THE X-FORCE, SPIKE?
FEELS GOOD.
BY THE WAY. WORD OF ADVICE.

DON'T GO STARTING ANY LONG NOVELS, "BRUTHA."

OKAY, WHAT HE REALLY SAID WAS. . .
DAMN, YOU DON'T WANNA KNOW WHAT HE REALLY SAID.
SO. . . NOW THAT I HAVE DEALT WITH THOSE X-FORCE BAD BOYS PHAT AND THE VIVISECTOR, IT'S TIME TO TURN OUR ATTENTION TO NEW MEMBERS.
NOXS
REPORT
WE'RE PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THE INCLUSION OF THE SPIKE.
IN SPITE OF MEDIA REPORTS, WE'RE ALL PSYCHED TO HAVE A MUTANT LIKE THE SPIKE ON BOARD.
AND ALSO LACUNA.
LACUNA?
WHERE ARE YOU, LACUNA?
HELLO?
YOU CAN APPEAR NOW, LACUNA!
YOU WHAT?
EDIE, NOT WHILE WE'RE HAVING A PRESS CONFERENCE!
WHO?
THOSE BASTARDS!
THE NETWORK!
THEY'VE CANCELLED MY DAMN SHOW!

WELL, WHEN THE NETWORK ASKED ME TO DO THIS SHOW. . . I WAS JUST A **LITTLE** SURPRISED.

LACUNA AND THE STARS!

BUT THEN THEY MADE IT SOUND SO MUCH FUN. LIKE I'LL POP UP ALL OVER THE PLACE, CATCHING THE CELEBRITIES WE LOVE TO WATCH OFF GUARD!

ON THEIR WEDDING NIGHTS, IN THEIR BATHROOMS, EVEN IN THOSE QUIET MOMENTS OF DESPAIR WHEN THEY THINK THEY'RE SAFE FROM PRYING EYES.

BUT IT WON'T ALL BE LIGHT AND FROTHY. ON "LACUNA AND THE STARS," USING MY INCREDIBLE TALENT, WE'LL BE FINDING OUT WHAT THE STARS **REALLY EAT!**

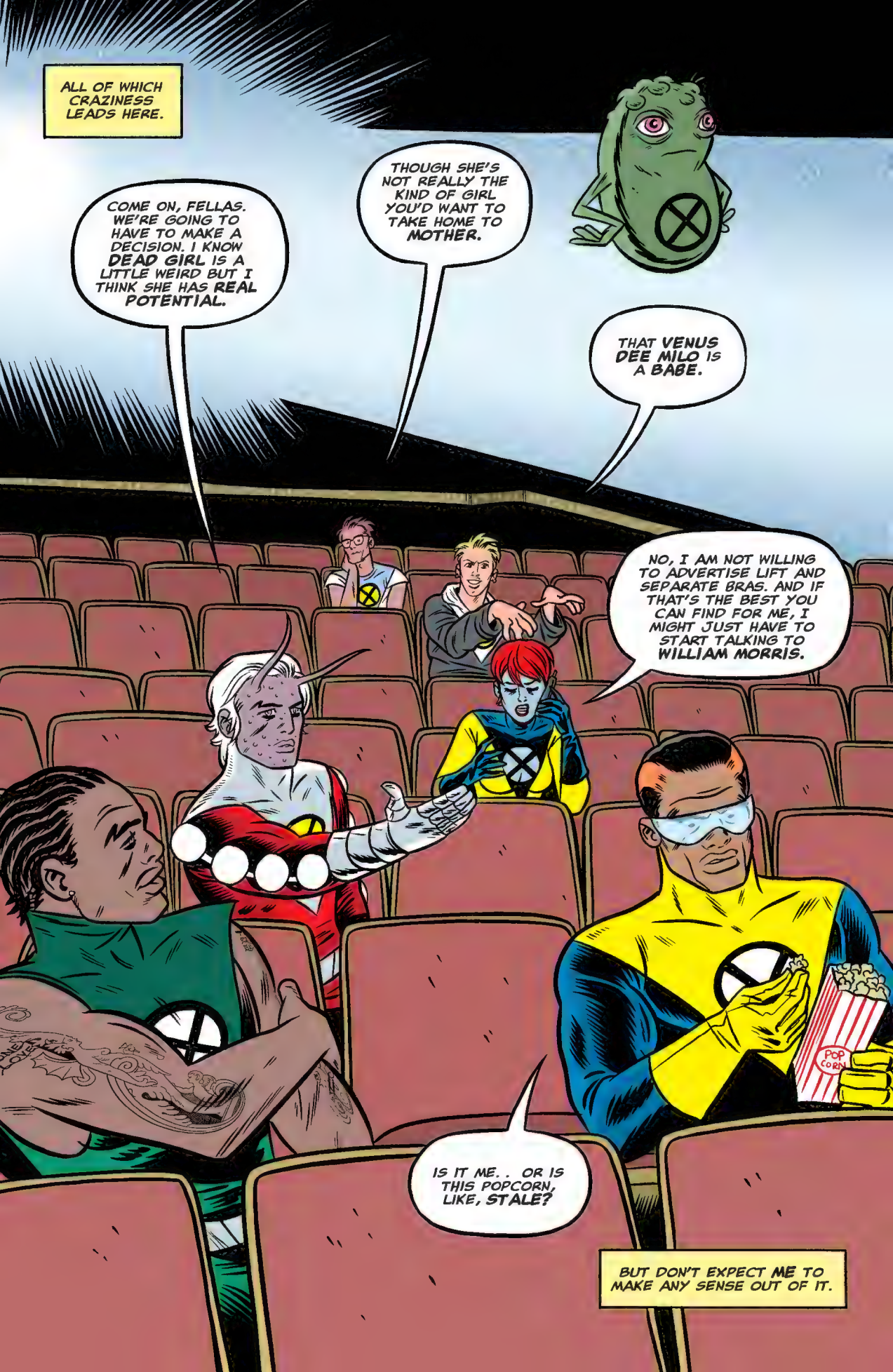
I KNOW THAT SOME OF YOU WONDER WHY I'VE MADE THIS CAREER CHANGE, AFTER SEEMING TO BE SO KEEN ON JOINING THOSE LOVEABLE X-FORCE GUYS.

THE TRUTH IS, I REALLY THOUGHT I WANTED THAT. I BELIEVED THAT I COULD HELP MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE. AND I WAS TRULY HONORED TO BE ASKED TO JOIN THEM.

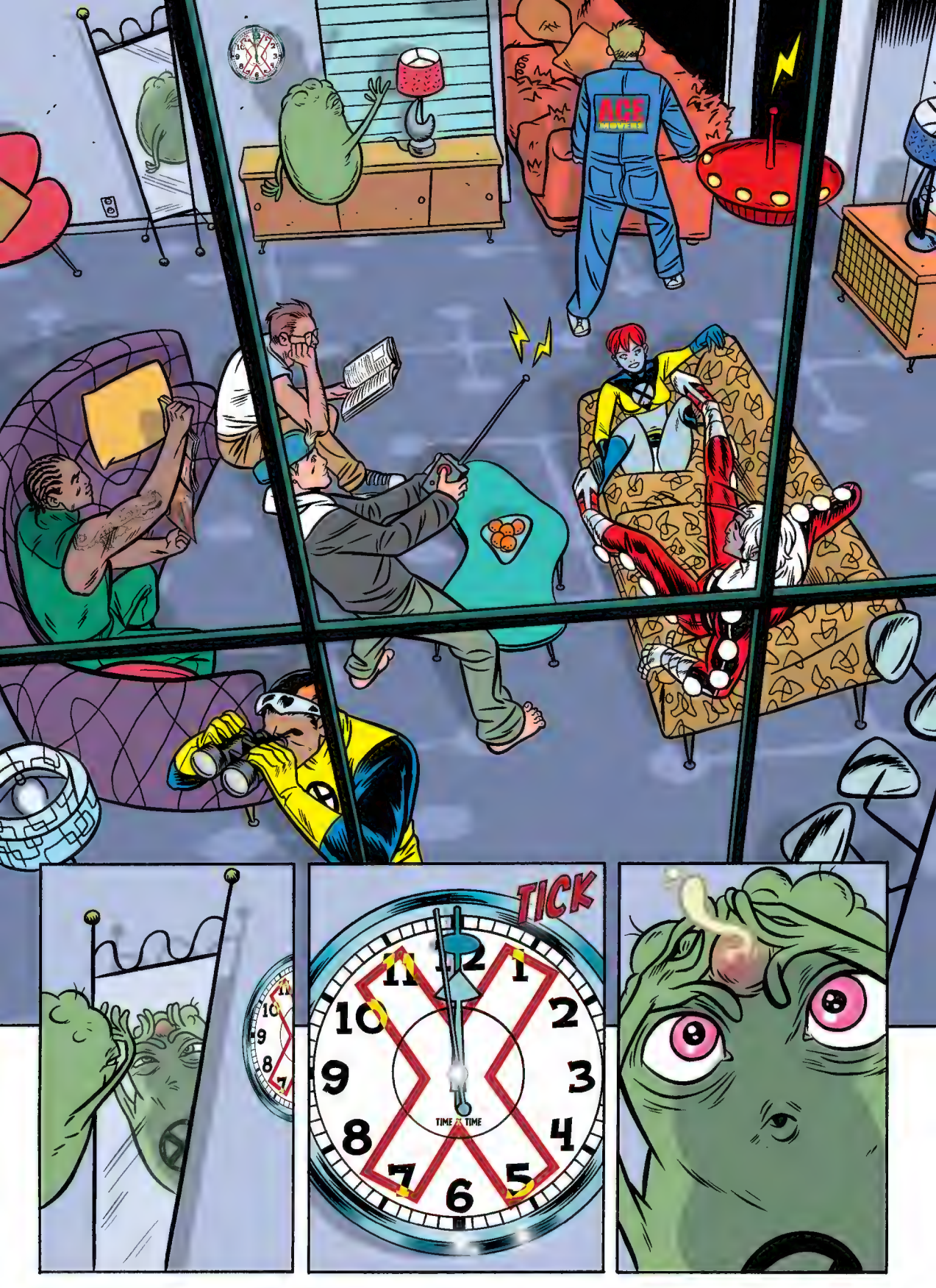
BUT THEN I REALIZED THAT **X-FORCE** WASN'T REALLY THAT **IMPORTANT.**

I REALIZED THAT ALL I EVER **REALLY** WANTED. . .

. . .WAS TO BE A **DISAPPOINTMENT** TO MY **PARENTS!**

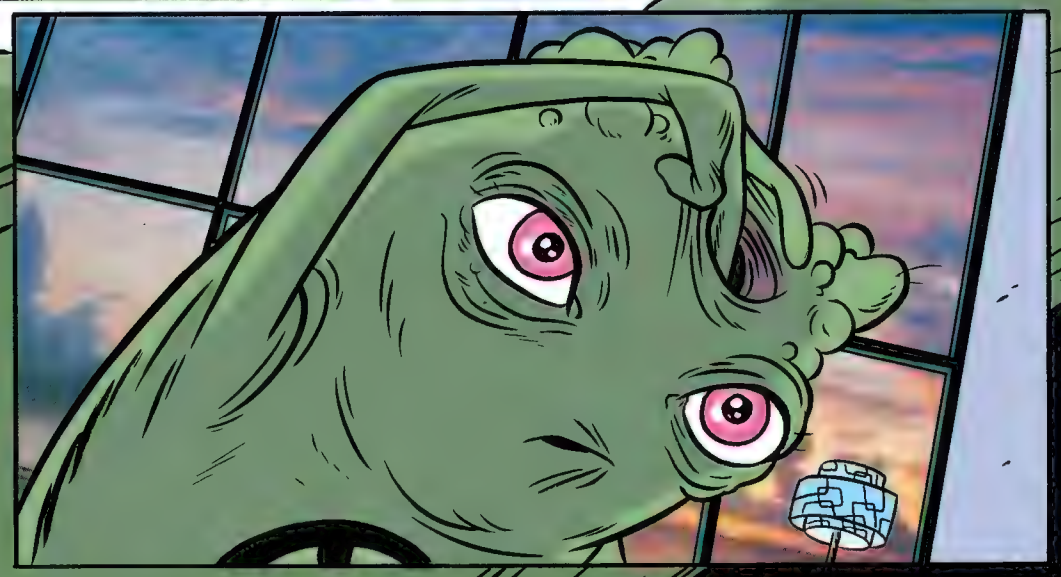

ALL OF WHICH CRAZINESS LEADS HERE.
COME ON, FELLAS. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO MAKE A DECISION. I KNOW DEAD GIRL IS A LITTLE WEIRD BUT I THINK SHE HAS REAL POTENTIAL.
THOUGH SHE'S NOT REALLY THE KIND OF GIRL YOU'D WANT TO TAKE HOME TO MOTHER.
THAT VENUS DEE MILO IS A BABE.
NO, I AM NOT WILLING TO ADVERTISE LIFT AND SEPARATE BRAS. AND IF THAT'S THE BEST YOU CAN FIND FOR ME, I MIGHT JUST HAVE TO START TALKING TO WILLIAM MORRIS.
IS IT ME. . OR IS THIS POPCORN, LIKE, STALE?
BUT DON'T EXPECT ME TO MAKE ANY SENSE OUT OF IT.
POP CORN

X-FORCE #123


ACE
MOVERS
TICK
TIME TIME

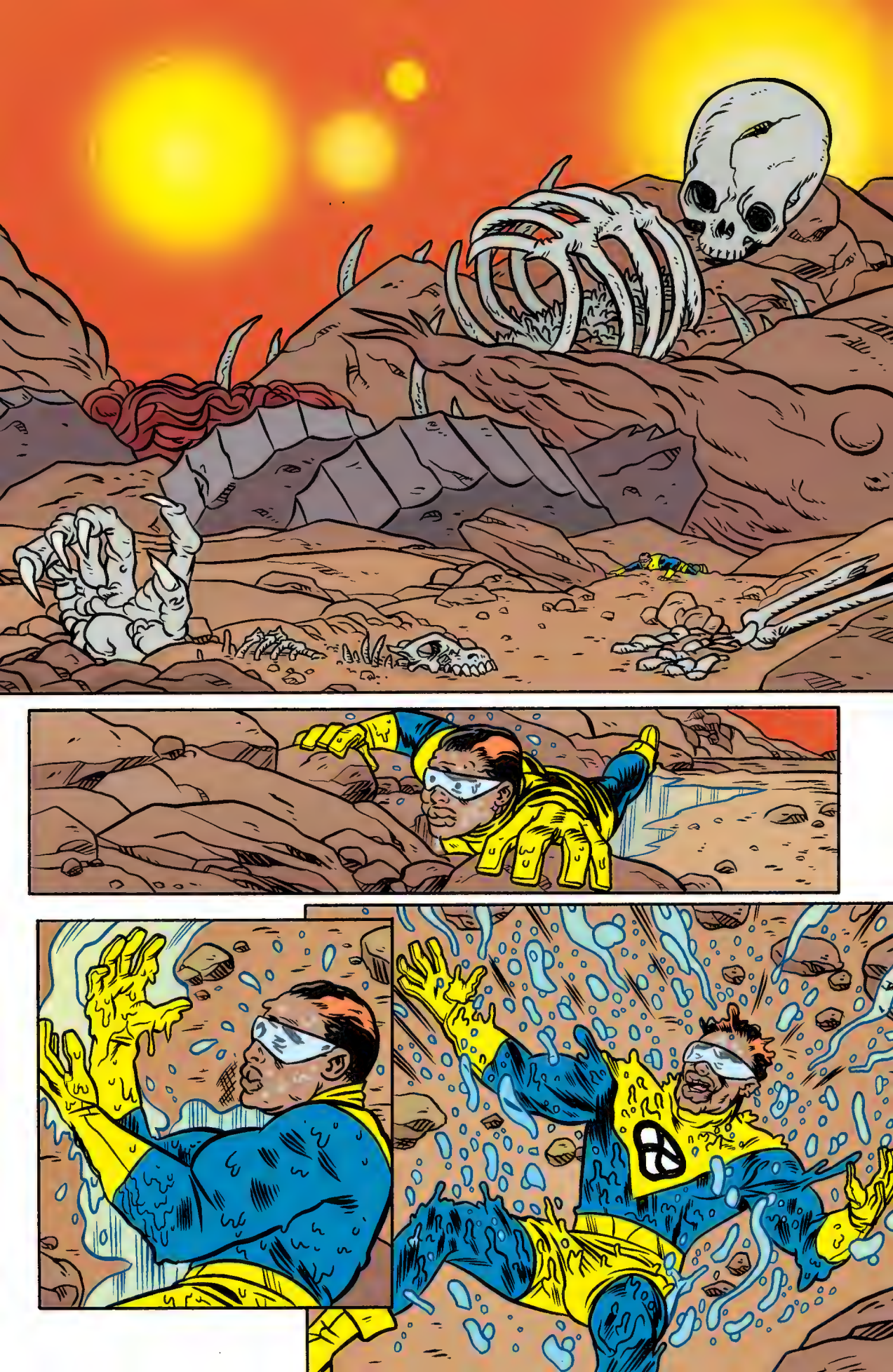
STAN LEE PRESENTS
PETER MILLIGAN WRITER
MICHAEL ALLRED ARTIST
LAURA ALLRED-COLORIST
DOC ALLRED & BLAMBOT- LETTERS
JOHN NIESEGAES-ASST. EDITOR
AXEL ALONSO-EDITOR
JOE QUESADA-CHIEF
BILL JEMAS-PRES.

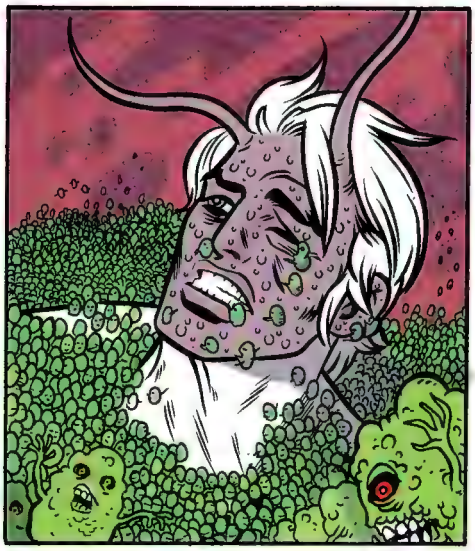
EVERYMAN

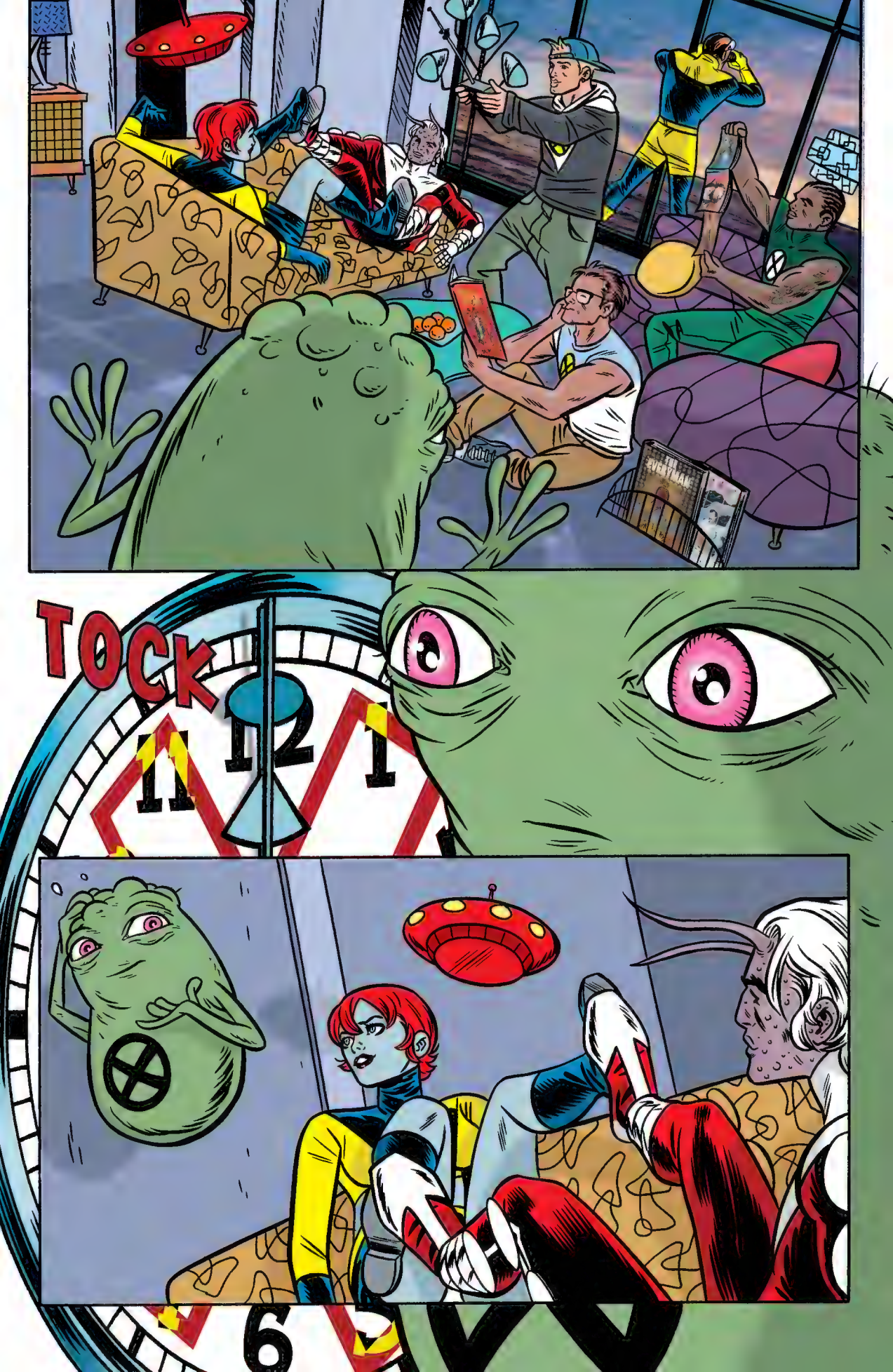


TIME IS TIME

SPIKEY
SPIKEY
CROSS-DRESSING
SPIKEY
CROSS-DRESSING
SPIKEY
CROSS-DRESSING



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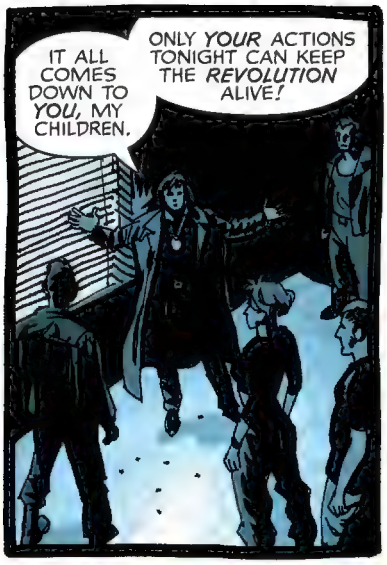
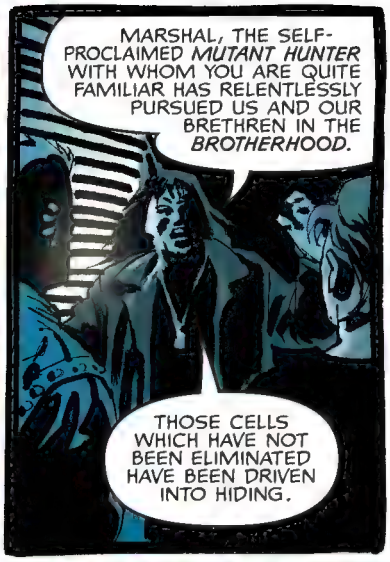
BROTHERHOOD #9

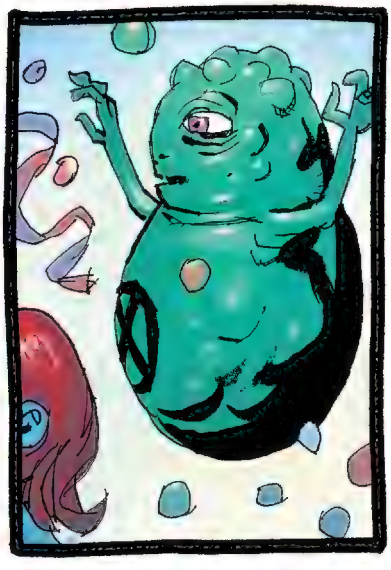

IT ALL COMES DOWN TO *YOU*, MY CHILDREN.
ONLY *YOUR* ACTIONS TONIGHT CAN KEEP THE *REVOLUTION* ALIVE!

DOOP!


MARSHAL, THE SELF-PROCLAIMED *MUTANT HUNTER* WITH WHOM YOU ARE QUITE FAMILIAR HAS RELENTLESSLY PURSUED US AND OUR BRETHREN IN THE *BROTHERHOOD*.
THOSE CELLS WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN ELIMINATED HAVE BEEN DRIVEN INTO HIDING.

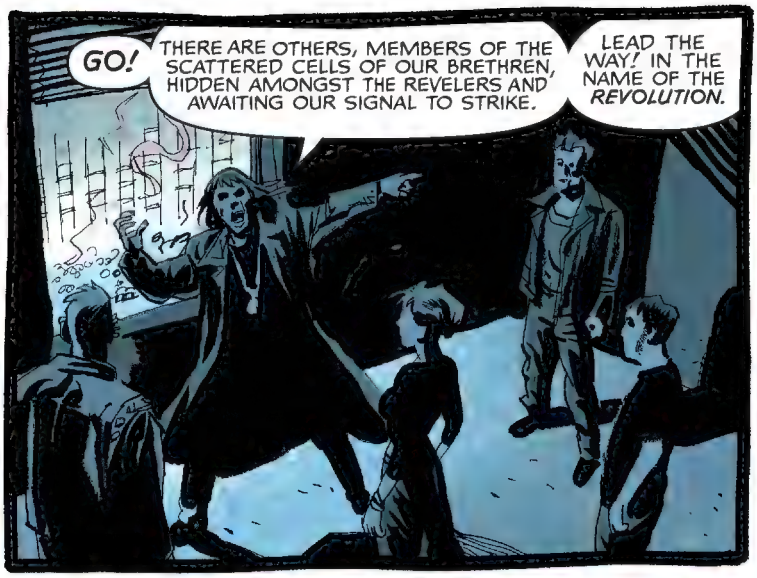
THE TIME HAS COME TO *STRIKE BACK*.
TO SHOW THE WORLD THE REVOLUTION-- THE *BROTHERHOOD*-- IS ALIVE AND WELL.

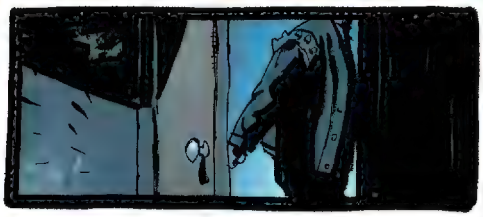
ASHER, FAGIN, MALON... AND, OF COURSE, ORWELL...
...THIS IS YOUR MOMENT...



...AND THERE IS OUR *TARGET*, MY CHILDREN.
THE *HEART* OF THE *OPPOSITION!* EVERYTHING WE *OPPOSE* IN ONE INDIVIDUAL...

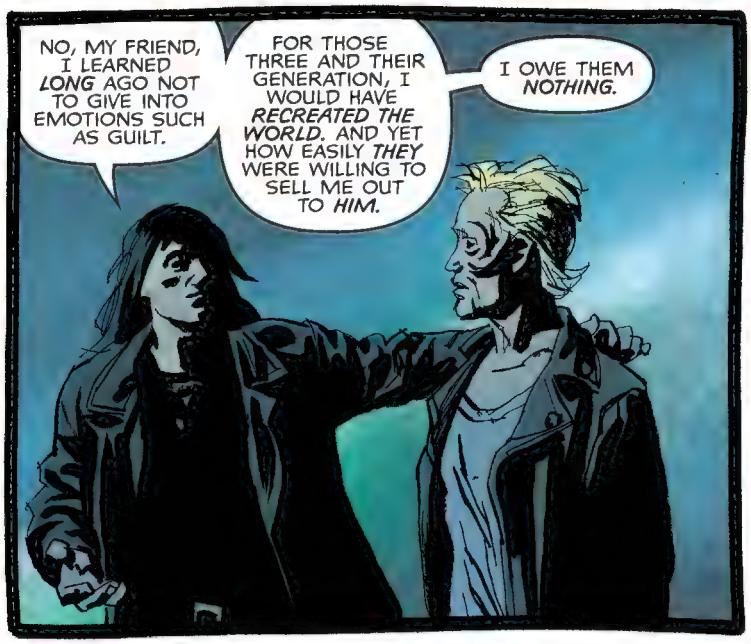
STAN LEE PRESENTS:
THE EAGLE AND THE SERPENT
X
SCRIPT
SEAN PHILLIPS & KENT WILLIAMS ART
DAN KEMP COLORS
JON BABCOCK LETTERS
AXEL ALONSO EDITOR
JOHN MIESEGAES ASSISTANT EDITOR
JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF
BILL JEMAS PRESIDENT
"HERE LAY THE DILEMMA: EITHER VILLA WOULD SUBMIT TO THE IDEA OF THE REVOLUTION WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING IT, IN WHICH CASE HE AND THE TRUE REVOLUTION WOULD SUCCEED, OR VILLA WOULD FOLLOW HIS INSTINCTS BLINDLY, AND THE REVOLUTION AND HE WOULD BOTH FAIL."
--MARTIN LUIS GUZMAN "EL AGUILA Y LA SERPIENT"
--BACK FROM THEIR TRIUMPHANT CAMPAIGN IN JAPAN, WHERE THEY SMASHED A TOKYO-BASED MUTANT TERRORIST CELL, AND BOY, DO THE PEOPLE LOVE 'EM!
IT'S HARD NOT TO LOVE 'EM, KATIE. ORPHAN, ANARCHIST, U-GO GIRL, LACUNA, PHAT, VIVISECTOR AND, OF COURSE, THE LOVABLE GREEN BLOB KNOWN AS DOOP, HAVE CERTAINLY BECOME AMERICA'S FAVORITE MUTANTS!
I MEAN, C'MON, YOU'VE GOT TO LOVE DOOP.
APPARENTLY MADONNA DOES! AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE!
Heh. THAT'S JUST A RUMOR, BRYANT! BUT DOOP HAS BEEN ROMANTICALLY LINKED WITH--
DOOP. A CIPHER. A GELATINOUS BLOB OF NOTHING.
IT DIES TODAY.


GO!
THERE ARE OTHERS, MEMBERS OF THE SCATTERED CELLS OF OUR BRETHREN, HIDDEN AMONGST THE REVELERS AND AWAITING OUR SIGNAL TO STRIKE.
LEAD THE WAY! IN THE NAME OF THE REVOLUTION.



SO IT BEGINS, ORWELL, MY FRIEND...

...OR SO IT ENDS.
ONLY TIME WILL TELL.


NO, MY FRIEND, I LEARNED LONG AGO NOT TO GIVE INTO EMOTIONS SUCH AS GUILT.
FOR THOSE THREE AND THEIR GENERATION, I WOULD HAVE RECREATED THE WORLD. AND YET HOW EASILY THEY WERE WILLING TO SELL ME OUT TO HIM.
I OWE THEM NOTHING.

BESIDES, THIS TRULY IS THE END GAME.
AND THEY REALLY WILL SERVE A ROLE IN THE REBIRTH OF THE REVOLUTION.

YOU SURE YOU MADE IT ABSOLUTELY CLEAR TO MARSHAL, ASHER?
HE KNOWS IT'S GOING DOWN TODAY?
I SPOKE TO HIM DIRECTLY, FAGIN. HE KNOWS.

AND THE PLAN IS...?
WE JUST KEEP ACTING AS IF WE'RE GOING THROUGH WITH HOFFMAN'S SCHEME.

BUT WHAT ABOUT US? WHAT'S OUR EXIT STRATEGY?
MARSHAL DIDN'T SAY.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN HE DIDN'T SAY?!
WE'RE WALKING INTO GOD KNOWS WHAT AND THERE'S NO BLOODY PLAN?!
I... er... I DIDN'T THINK... C-CAN'T... BREATHE!

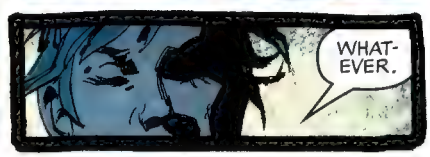
LET GO OF HIM, FAGIN.
I SHOULD BLOODY KILL THE BOTH OF YOU, GO UPSTAIRS AND LET HOFFMAN KNOW EVERYTHING. MAYBE HE'LL GO EASY ON ME. MAYBE HE'D--

I SAID...
...LET HIM GO!

BLOODY HELL!

WE GO THROUGH THE MOTIONS. SEE IF WE CAN FIGURE OUT HOW MANY OF THE OTHER CELLS HAVE MADE IT HERE. IT'S THE KIND OF INFORMATION THAT MARSHAL IS GOING TO NEED.

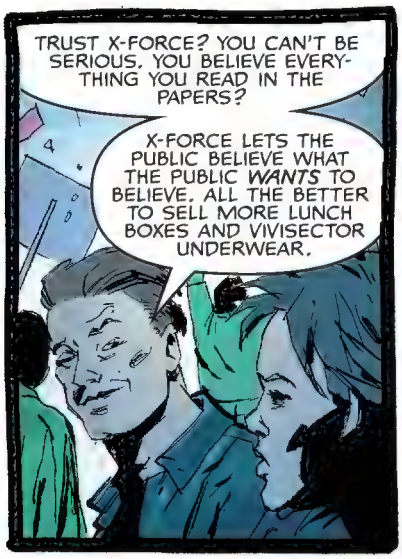
I LOVE THIS JACKET, GIRL.
WHEN THIS IS OVER... YOU'RE BUYING ME A NEW ONE.

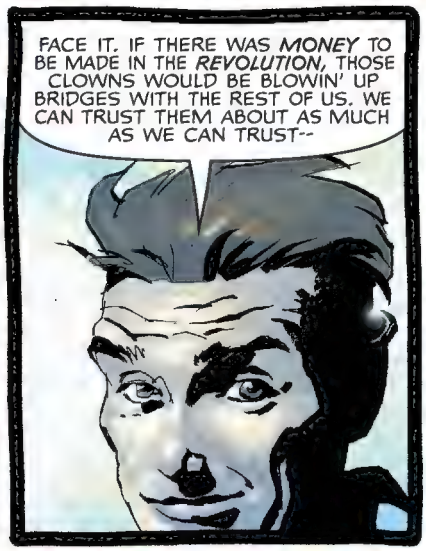

WHATEVER.

BUT WHAT ABOUT *X-FORCE?*
SHOULDN'T WE TIP THEM OFF? I MEAN--
BLOODY HELL! A *FAN-BOY!*
HOW DID YOU *EVER* FOOL ANYONE INTO THINKING YOU COULD BE A REVOLUTIONARY? BETCHA GOT THE COMPLETE SET OF *ACTION* FIGURES AND A *U-GO GIRL* POSTER OVER YOUR BED!

YEAH... *SO?* SHE'S PRETTY *HOT!*
WHAT THE HELL AM I *DOING* HERE?

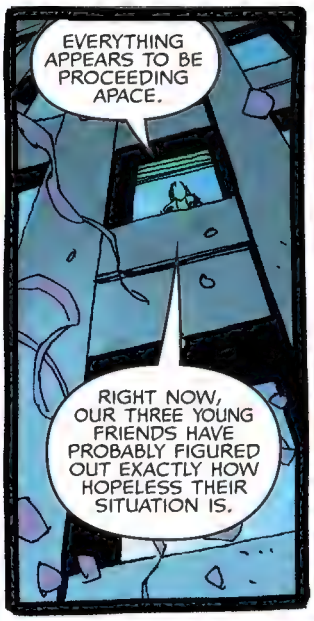
CHILL *OUT,* FAGIN! THE KID HAS GOT A *POINT.*
THE ODDS INCREASE IN *OUR* FAVOR IF WE CAN GET WORD TO X-FORCE.
ODD AS IT SOUNDS, THEY'RE PROBABLY THE *ONLY* ONES WE CAN REALLY TRUST.


TRUST X-FORCE? YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS. YOU BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU READ IN THE PAPERS?
X-FORCE LETS THE PUBLIC BELIEVE WHAT THE PUBLIC *WANTS* TO BELIEVE. ALL THE BETTER TO SELL MORE LUNCH BOXES AND VIVISECTOR UNDERWEAR.

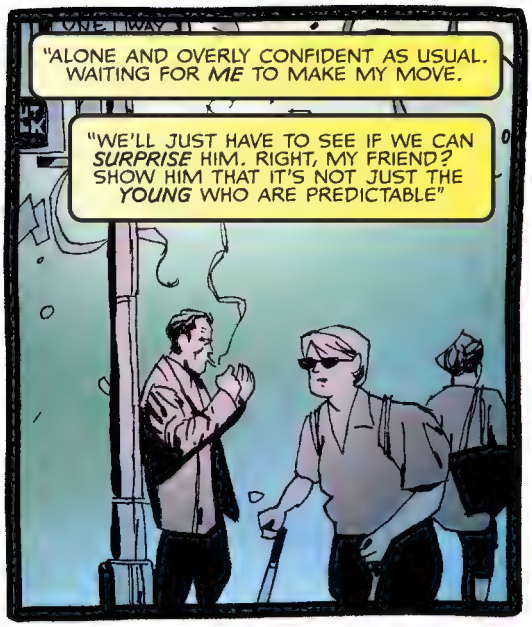

FACE IT. IF THERE WAS *MONEY* TO BE MADE IN THE *REVOLUTION,* THOSE CLOWNS WOULD BE BLOWIN' UP BRIDGES WITH THE REST OF US. WE CAN TRUST THEM ABOUT AS MUCH AS WE CAN TRUST--

MARSHAL?
HE DOESN'T CARE ABOUT US ANY MORE THAN HOFFMAN DOES. *WE* ARE ALL WE'VE GOT.

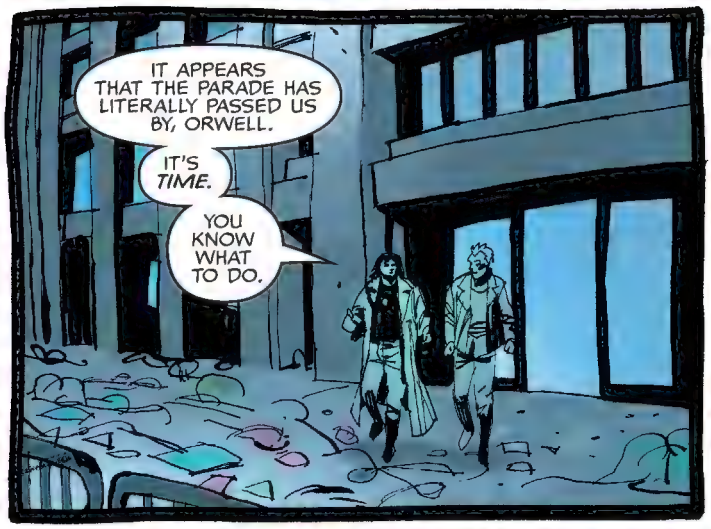
POINT TAKEN.
GOOD.
IF WE GO DOWN, WE GO DOWN FIGHTING. HAVING X-FORCE ON OUR SIDE IS OUR BEST HOPE FOR LIVING OUT THE DAY.

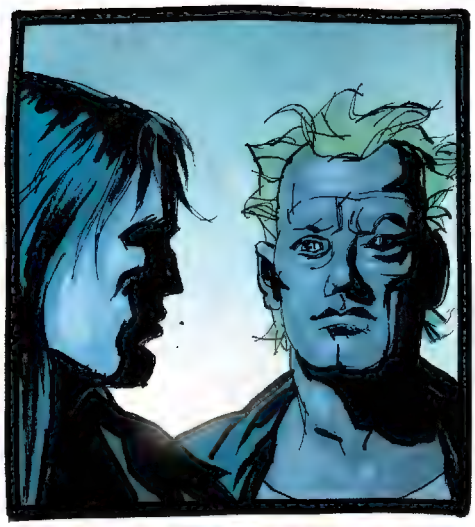

EVERYTHING APPEARS TO BE PROCEEDING APACE.
RIGHT NOW, OUR THREE YOUNG FRIENDS HAVE PROBABLY FIGURED OUT EXACTLY HOW HOPELESS THEIR SITUATION IS.

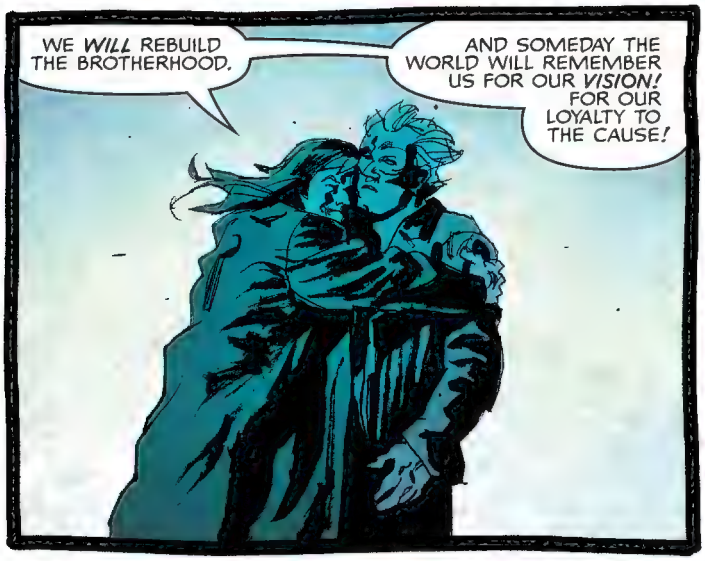
THE YOUNG ARE SO PREDICTABLE, ORWELL.
NOW... FOR MY OLD FRIEND MARSHAL... I ASSUME HE IS SOMEWHERE OUT THERE.


"ALONE AND OVERLY CONFIDENT AS USUAL. WAITING FOR ME TO MAKE MY MOVE.
"WE'LL JUST HAVE TO SEE IF WE CAN SURPRISE HIM. RIGHT, MY FRIEND? SHOW HIM THAT IT'S NOT JUST THE YOUNG WHO ARE PREDICTABLE"

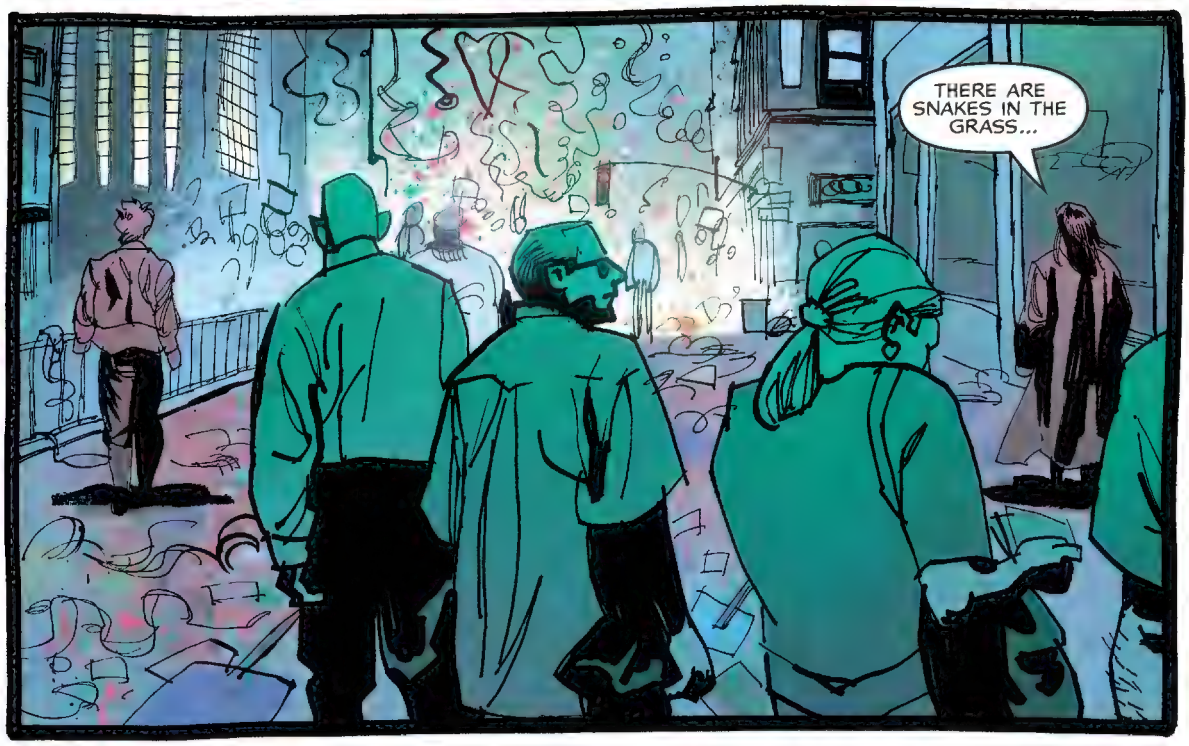
THIS IS THE BEST YOU CAN COME UP WITH, HOFFMAN?
YOU REALLY ARE IN FOR SOME TROUBLE.


IT APPEARS THAT THE PARADE HAS LITERALLY PASSED US BY, ORWELL.
IT'S *TIME.*
YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO.




WE *WILL* REBUILD THE BROTHERHOOD.
AND SOMEDAY THE WORLD WILL REMEMBER US FOR OUR *VISION!* FOR OUR LOYALTY TO THE CAUSE!

WATCH YOUR STEP, MY FRIEND.


THERE ARE SNAKES IN THE GRASS...

IF THIS ALL GOES DOWN LIKE WE HOPE IT WILL, DO YOU THINK, LIKE, MAYBE X-FORCE WOULD CONSIDER TAKING APPLICATIONS?
HELL, THEY'VE GOT A *FARM TEAM*-- WHO KNOWS?

I KNOW I'M COMING OFF LIKE SOME SORT OF FAN GEEK, BUT X-FORCE, THEY... WELL, THEY GIVE ME HOPE. FOR ALL MUTANTS, YOU KNOW?
WHY DID HOFFMAN TARGET THEM-- TARGET *DOOP?*

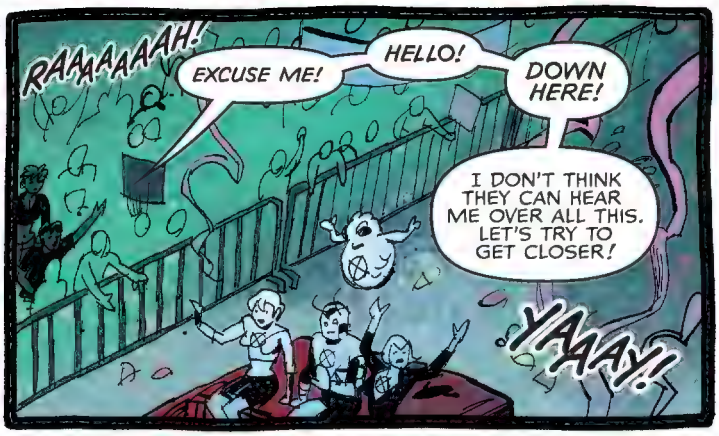
BECAUSE OF WHAT THEY *REPRESENT.* DON'T WORRY, ASHER. WE'LL GET TO THEM, AND THEY'LL STOP HIM.

Yeah, yeah... KISS, KISS, GROUP HUG!
LET'S GET THIS BLOODY *OVER WITH!*

THE CROWD IS THINNIN' OUT UP AHEAD. WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET X-FORCE'S ATTENTION AT THE NEXT CORNER.

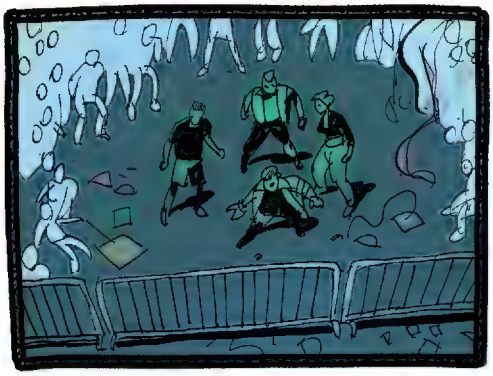
YES. YES.
I KNOW WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE, SIR.

RAAAAAAAH!
YAAAY!
YEAH!
X-FOOORCEE!!


RAAAAAAH!
EXCUSE ME!
HELLO!
DOWN HERE!
I DON'T THINK THEY CAN HEAR ME OVER ALL THIS. LET'S TRY TO GET CLOSER!
YAAAY!

YAAAY!
RAAAH!
YEAH!
X-FORCE!

KILL THEM IN THE NAME OF THE REVOLUTION, BROTHERS!
KILL THE MUTANT SELL OUTS!



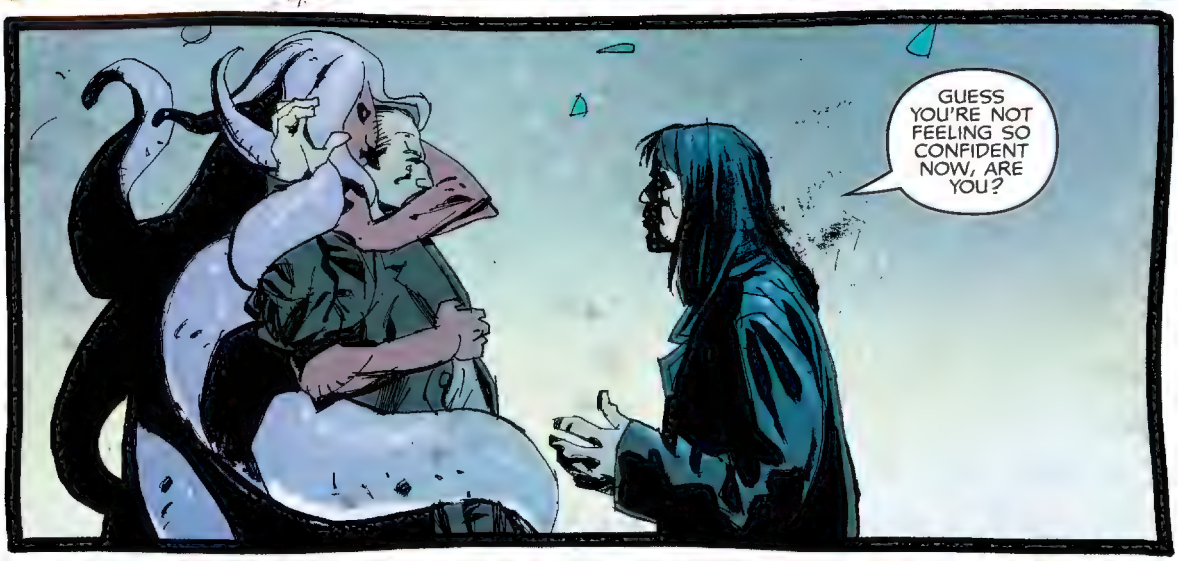
KILL THE MUTIE TRAITORS!

Er... WE'RE NOT WITH HIM. WE CAME TO WARN YOU.
WE'RE REALLY NOT WITH THEM!

WE'RE MUTANTS, TOO! WE WANT TO HELP!
REALLY.

BLOODY HELL.
RIGHT ON SCHEDULE.
LET'S *DO* IT THEN, HOFFMAN.
BEEN A LONG TIME COMING.
WHAT THE--?

STRUGGLING AGAINST Ms. FINGER'S *GRIP* IS REALLY QUITE USELESS, MARSHAL.


GUESS YOU'RE NOT FEELING SO CONFIDENT NOW, ARE YOU?

HMMMFUNMMPH!
DID YOU REALLY THINK THAT YOU COULD JUST WALTZ IN AND SAVE THE DAY?

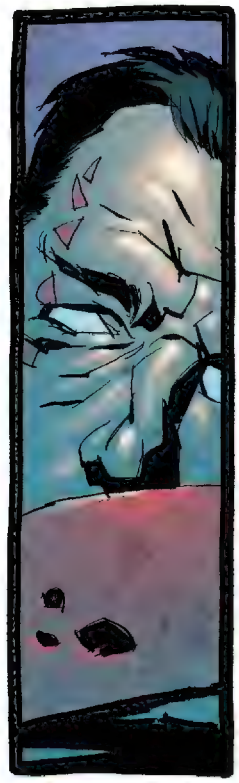
Shhh! THERE WILL BE TIME FOR THAT KIND OF TALK *LATER*.
FOR NOW LET'S JUST ACCEPT THAT YOU HAVE *LOST*. ENJOY THIS LITTLE SHOW WHILE WE'RE *BOTH* BREATHING.

WE ARE SO SCREWED!
I'M FIGHTING MY WAY OUT OF HERE! AND IF ANYONE GETS IN MY WAY...
I'M WITH YOU, FAGIN.

BUT THEY'RE X-FORCE. THEY'LL UNDERSTAND. THEY'RE THE GOOD GUYS.

VIVISECTOR, Huh? COOL NAME, BUT ANYONE WEARING THOSE COLORS COULDN'T BE TOO--

SHRRRRIP!
--TOUGH?



NO, ORPHAN, I DON'T WANT TO--
--UGPH!

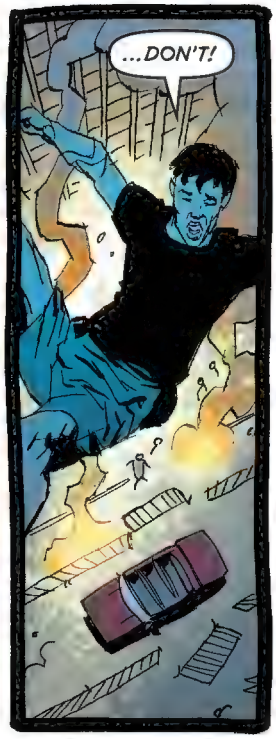
NO!
PHAT! SPIKE! ORPHAN! VIVISECTOR! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? WE'RE NOT YOUR ENEMY! WE CAME HERE TO--

Ow!

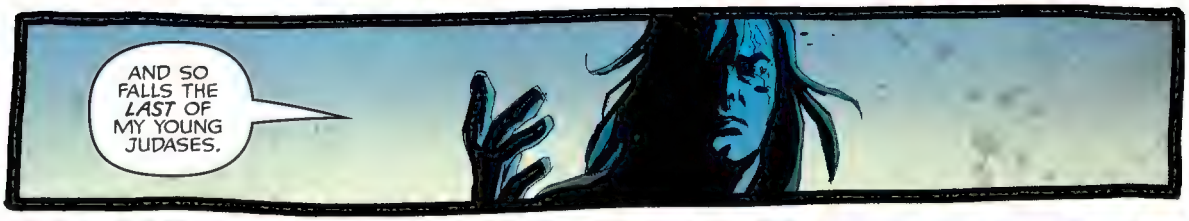
IT... WASN'T SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN THIS WAY.

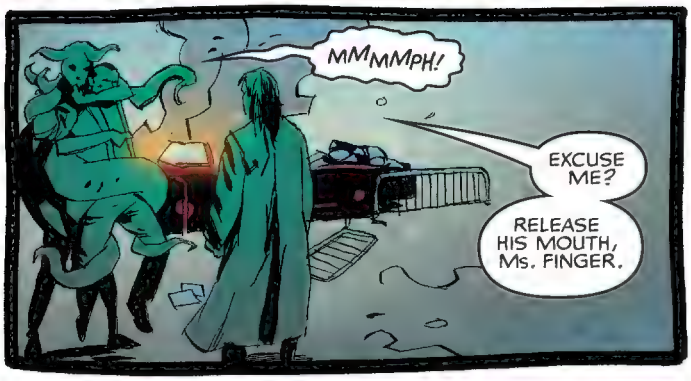
DOOP?
PLEASE, LISTEN TO ME. YOU'VE GOT TO--

WHAT--?
Oh, NO. ONE OF U-GO GIRL'S TELEPORTATION HOLES!
PLEASE...


...DON'T!

FWOMP!


AND SO FALLS THE *LAST* OF MY YOUNG JUDASES.


MMMMPH!
EXCUSE ME?
RELEASE HIS MOUTH, Ms. FINGER.

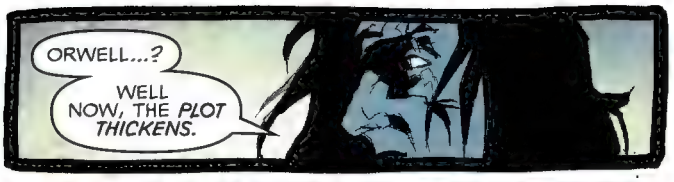
I *SAID*, ASHER WASN'T THE *LAST!*

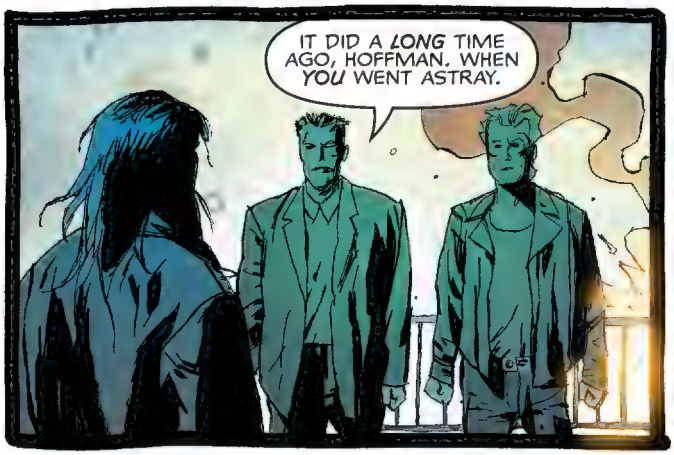
Oh. I SEE. YOU'RE FEELING *LEFT OUT.*
BUT YOUR BETRAYAL OF ME--OF THE *CAUSE*--OCCURRED LONG AGO, MY FRIEND.

STILL, ALL DEBTS WILL BE SETTLED.
Ms. FINGER, ON THE COUNT OF THREE, SQUEEZE THE LIFE OUT OF HIM.
ONE, TWO...

I WASN'T TALKING ABOUT *MYSELF.*

KRAK


ORWELL...?
WELL NOW, THE *PLOT THICKENS.*


IT DID A *LONG* TIME AGO, HOFFMAN. WHEN *YOU* WENT ASTRAY.

LET'S NOT FORGET IT WAS THE *THREE* OF US WHO PULLED THE BROTHERHOOD TOGETHER. IT WAS A *JOINT* VISION. NOT *YOURS* ALONE!
BUT *YOU*-- YOU LOST YOUR WAY. YOU TWISTED THE REVOLUTION INTO SOMETHING IT WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE. FOR YOUR OWN GAINS. YOUR OWN *GLORY.*

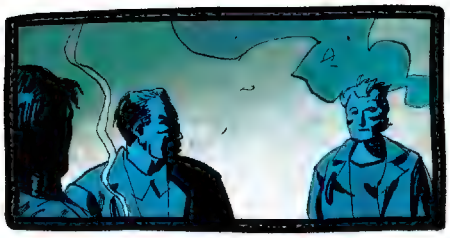
ORWELL AND I DECIDED SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE TO SET THINGS RIGHT.
PERSONALLY, *I'D* HAVE TAKEN YOU OUT A LONG TIME AGO. BUT ORWELL, *HE* HOPED HE COULD REEL YOU IN.

REEL ME IN?

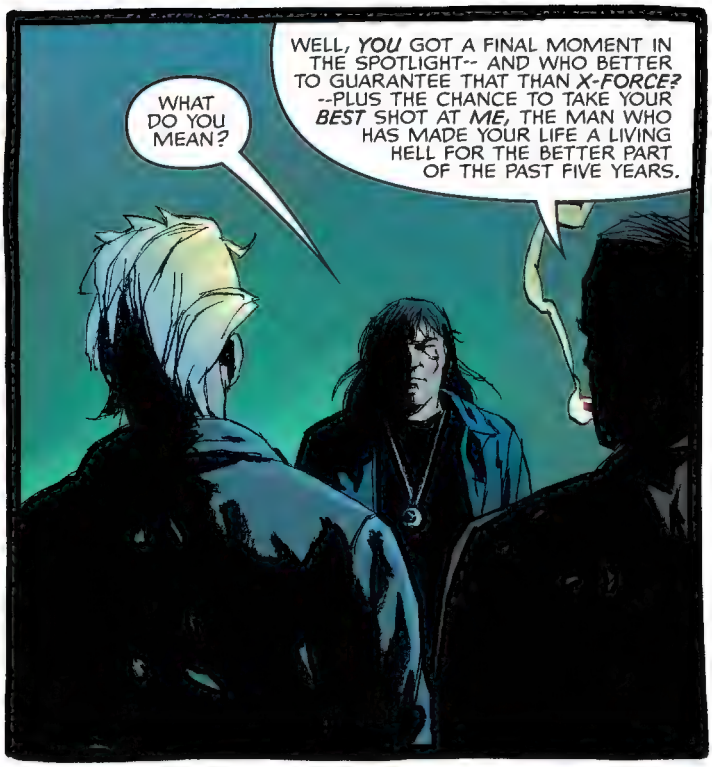
DID YOU REALLY THINK THAT I COULDN'T GET TO YOU, HOFFMAN? *ME?* NO ONE HAS *EVER* KNOWN YOU BETTER.

I HAD YOU IN MY SIGHTS A COUPLE OF TIMES, BUT OUR GOOD FRIEND HERE CONVINCED ME THAT YOU STILL SERVED A PURPOSE IN THE GREATER SCHEME OF THINGS.
HEY-- YOU KNOW WHAT JUST CROSSED MY MIND? THE WAY ORWELL WAS PLAYING *YOU,* THE WAY HE WAS GETTING IN *BOTH* OF OUR HEADS...

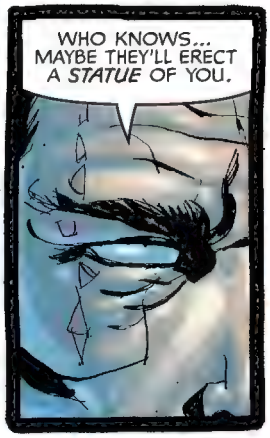
MAYBE WE'VE *BOTH* BEEN USED BY ORWELL ALL ALONG!



HAD YA THERE FOR A SECOND, DIDN'T I?
LOOK. NO HARD FEELINGS, OKAY? EVERYTHING WORKS OUT NICELY FOR US ALL.

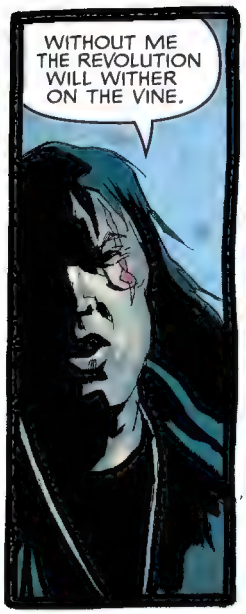

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
WELL, YOU GOT A FINAL MOMENT IN THE SPOTLIGHT-- AND WHO BETTER TO GUARANTEE THAT THAN X-FORCE? --PLUS THE CHANCE TO TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT AT ME, THE MAN WHO HAS MADE YOUR LIFE A LIVING HELL FOR THE BETTER PART OF THE PAST FIVE YEARS.

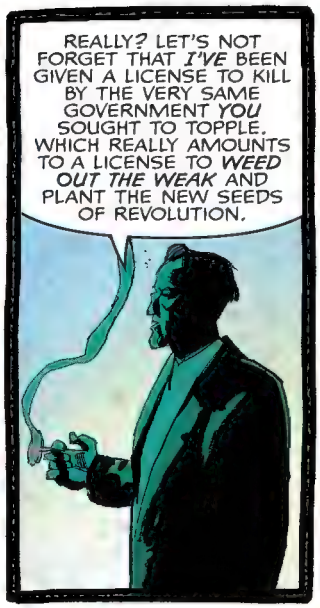
AND ME? I GET THE PERFECT LAUNCHING PAD FOR MY AGENDA...

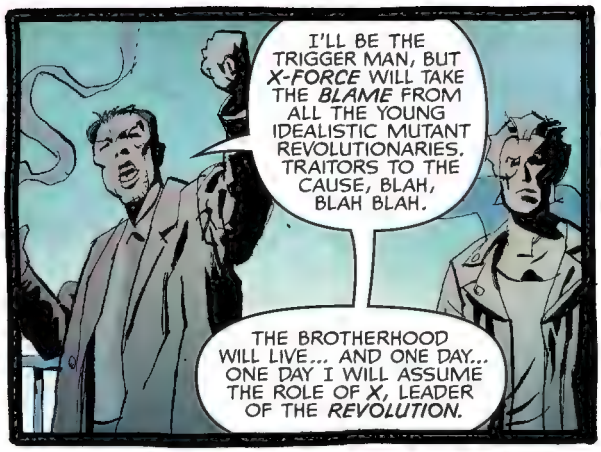

WHO KNOWS... MAYBE THEY'LL ERECT A STATUE OF YOU.

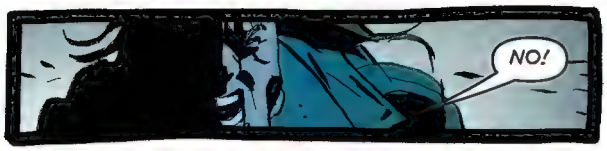
NOW YOU'RE MAKING NO SENSE.

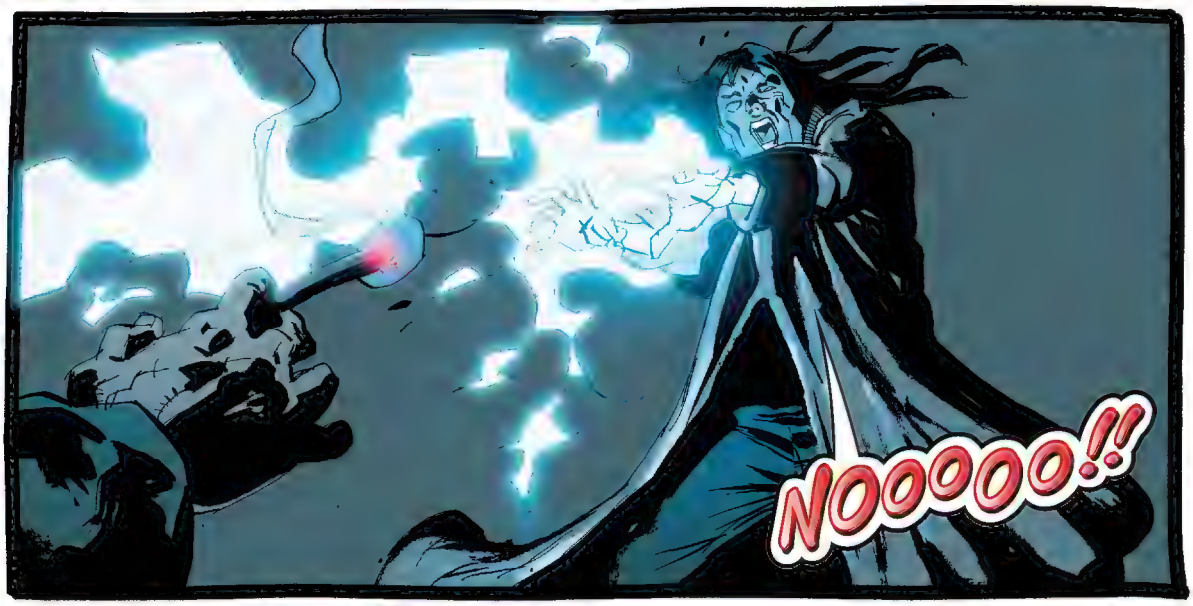
THEN I'LL SPELL IT OUT FOR YOU.
YOU'RE DONE, HOFFMAN. BUT IT'S NOT.

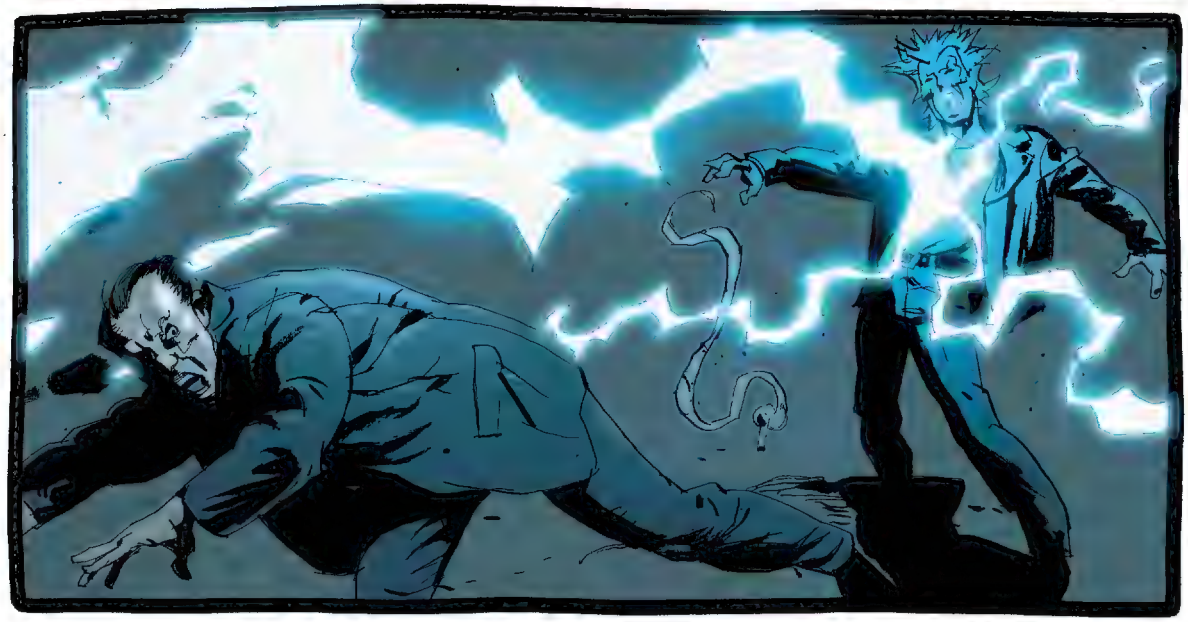

WITHOUT ME THE REVOLUTION WILL WITHER ON THE VINE.


REALLY? LET'S NOT FORGET THAT *I'VE* BEEN GIVEN A LICENSE TO KILL BY THE VERY SAME GOVERNMENT *YOU* SOUGHT TO TOPPLE. WHICH REALLY AMOUNTS TO A LICENSE TO *WEED OUT THE WEAK* AND PLANT THE NEW SEEDS OF REVOLUTION.


I'LL BE THE TRIGGER MAN, BUT *X-FORCE* WILL TAKE THE *BLAME* FROM ALL THE YOUNG IDEALISTIC MUTANT REVOLUTIONARIES. TRAITORS TO THE CAUSE, BLAH, BLAH BLAH.
THE BROTHERHOOD WILL LIVE... AND ONE DAY... ONE DAY I WILL ASSUME THE ROLE OF *X*, LEADER OF THE *REVOLUTION*.


NO!


NOOOOO!!

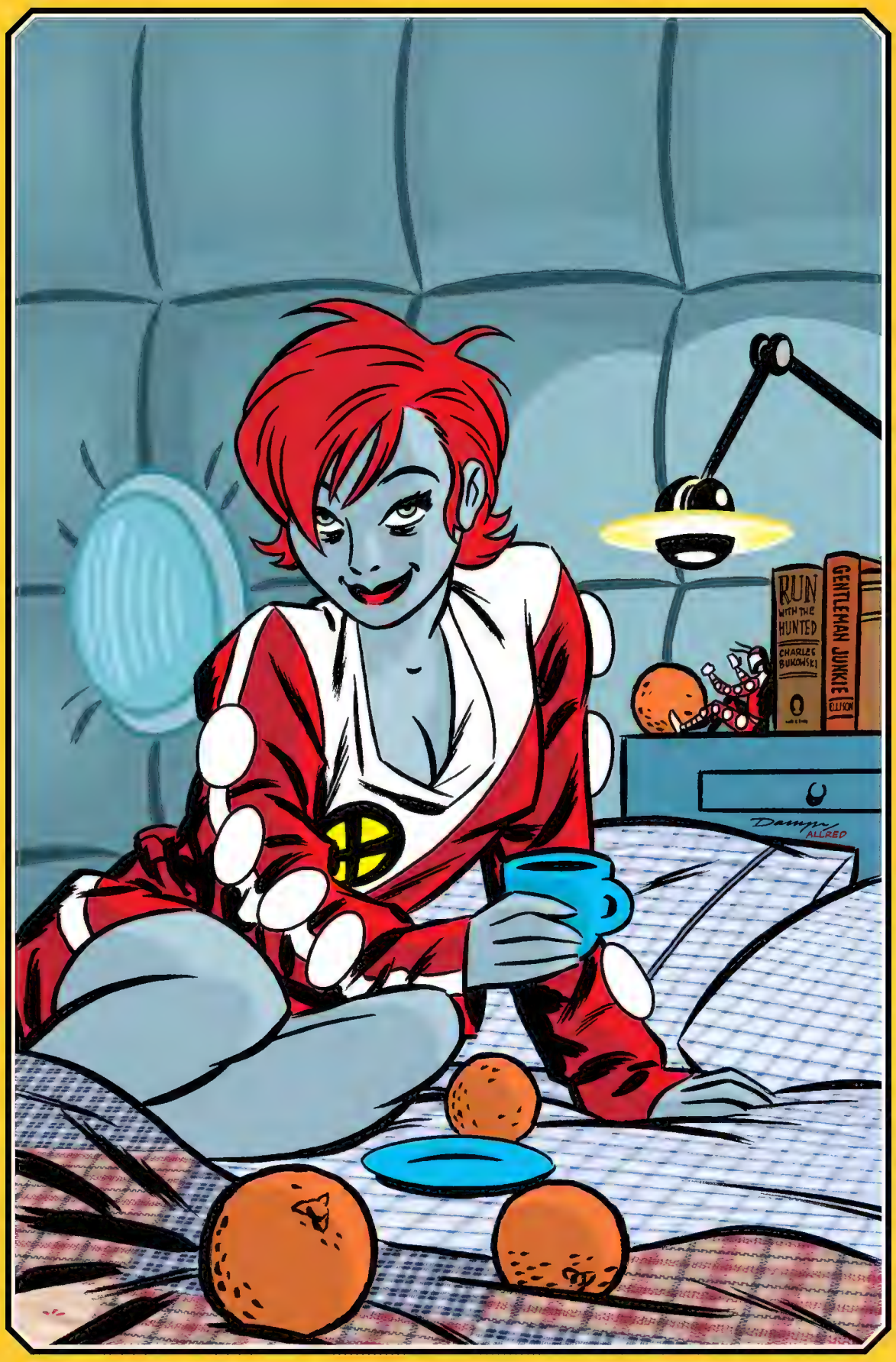


THANKS FOR THAT.
DIDN'T REALLY THINK I COULD TRUST *ANYONE* WHO WOULD SELL A FRIEND DOWN THE RIVER LIKE THAT.
BESIDES... THIS REALLY DID NEED TO END *MAN* TO *MAN!* JUST YOU AND ME.
...BOTH OF YOU... ...USED US...

HOW BLIND YOU WERE, HOFFMAN!
YOU NEVER SAW ANY OF IT COMING!
WHAT THE--?
OH...
...CRAP!
ROT IN HELL.
FRAKOOM

SO, DOES *ANYONE* HAVE A *CLUE* WHAT JUST HAPPENED HERE?

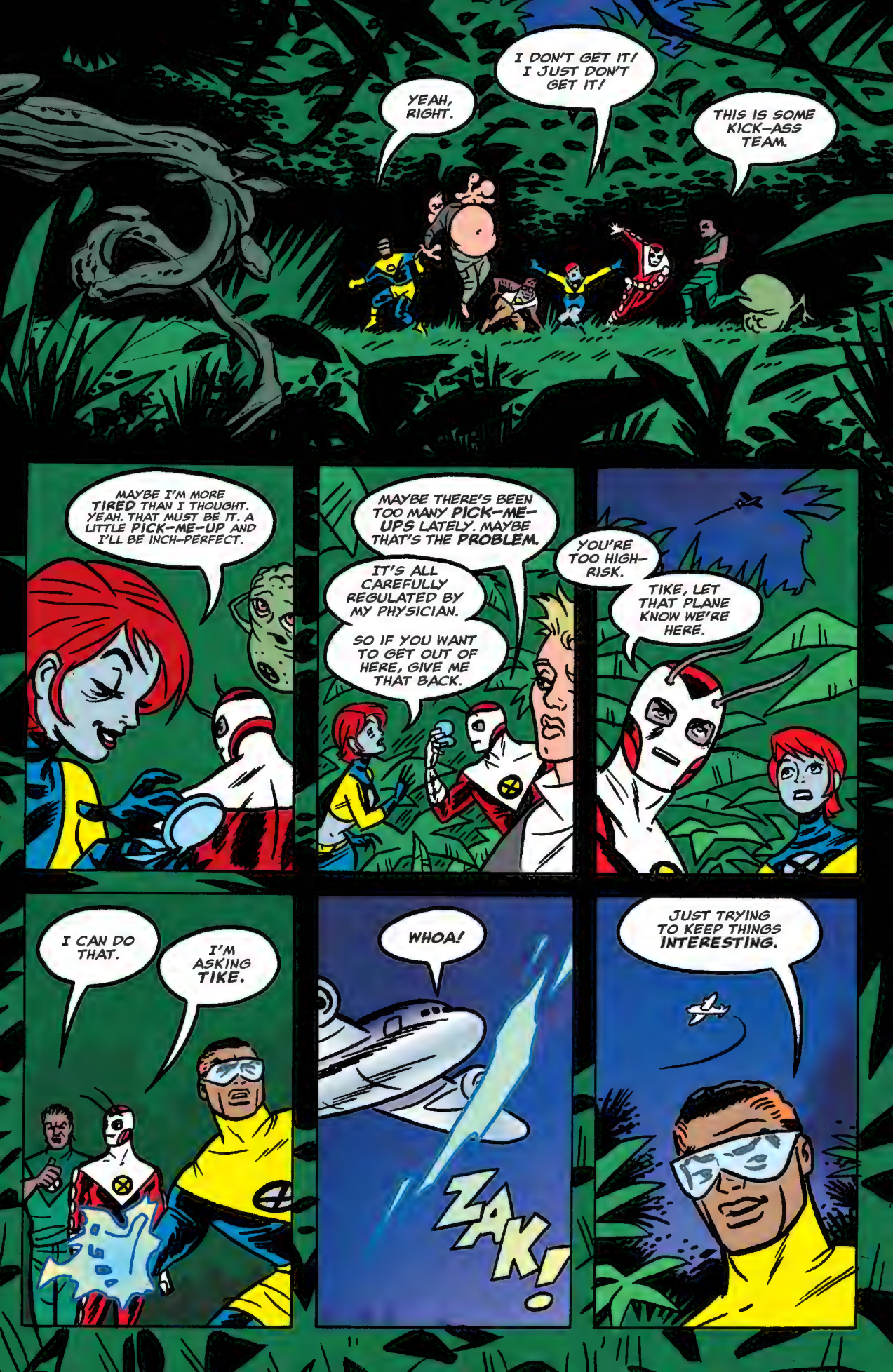
THE *END* OF THE REVOLUTION?
OH.
AND SO IT ENDS.


RUN WITH THE HUNTED
CHARLES BUKOWSKI
GENTLEMAN JUNKIE
ELLISON
Damyn ALLRED

X-FORCE #124

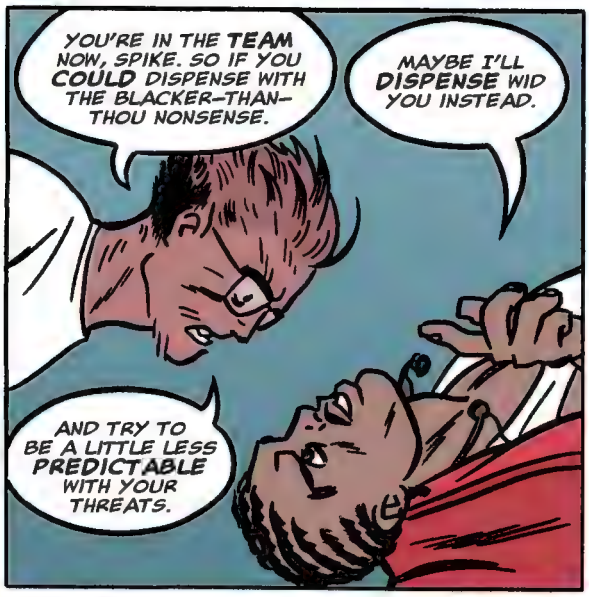
OUR WORK HERE IS DONE. TAKE US HOME, EDIE.
WHAT DO YOU THINK I'M DOING? MY AEROBIC EXERCISES?

ANY INJURIES?
I HAD A SUDDEN FIT OF ENNUI, BUT THAT DOESN'T COUNT, DOES IT?
JERK.
WHAT'S GOIN' ON?
I'M SORRY I... I DON'T KNOW HOW THAT HAPPENED...
EDIE?
GUYS... I CAN'T SWIM... SERIOUSLY... I CAN'T SWIM.
SO LEARN.
IT'S UNDER CONTROL.


YEAH, RIGHT.
I DON'T GET IT! I JUST DON'T GET IT!
THIS IS SOME KICK-ASS TEAM.
MAYBE I'M MORE TIRED THAN I THOUGHT. YEAH. THAT MUST BE IT. A LITTLE PICK-ME-UP AND I'LL BE INCH-PERFECT.
MAYBE THERE'S BEEN TOO MANY PICK-ME-UPS LATELY. MAYBE THAT'S THE PROBLEM.
IT'S ALL CAREFULLY REGULATED BY MY PHYSICIAN.
SO IF YOU WANT TO GET OUT OF HERE, GIVE ME THAT BACK.
YOU'RE TOO HIGH-RISK.
TIKE, LET THAT PLANE KNOW WE'RE HERE.
I CAN DO THAT.
I'M ASKING TIKE.
WHOA!
ZAK!
JUST TRYING TO KEEP THINGS INTERESTING.

THIS IS A REAL BOOST FOR OUR REPUTATION, HAVING TO HITCH A RIDE HOME WITH FEDERAL EXPRESS.
BE COOL. PEOPLE WILL JUST THINK WE'VE GOT SOME KINDA PRODUCT PLACEMENT DEAL WITH THEM.
YOU MEAN WE DON'T?
eddie and guy finally doit
STAN LEE PRESENTS
PETER MILLIGAN WRITER
DARWYN COOKE GUEST
LAURA ALLRED - COLORIST
DOC ALLRED + BLAMBOT - LETTERS
JOHN MIESEGAES ASST EDITOR
AXEL ALONSO EDITOR
JOE QUESADA - CHIEF
BILL JEMAS - PRES.

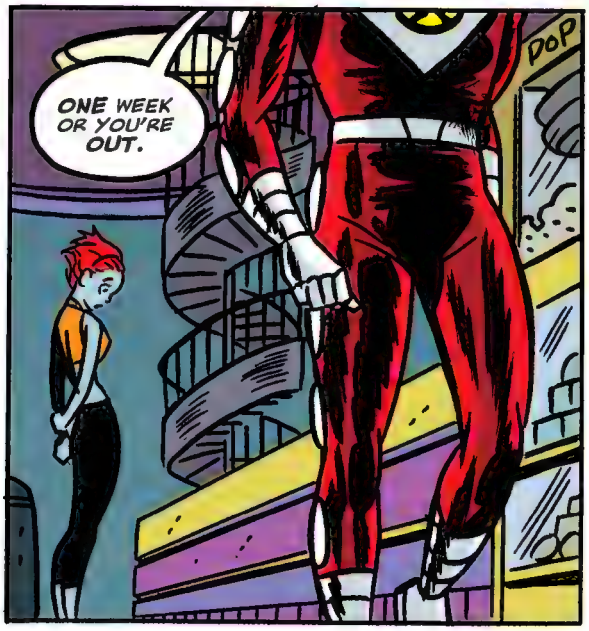
WE ALL HAVE OUR OFF DAYS. SO GET OFF MY BACK!
I'M GOING TO THE GYM.
NOT GOOD ENOUGH, EDIE.
I'M NOT A MACHINE. I'M AN ARTIST. YOU'VE GOT TO MAKE ALLOWANCES FOR MY CREATIVE EBB AND FLOW.
THERE'S BEEN MORE EBB THAN FLOW RECENTLY. YOU ALWAYS USED TO BE DEAD ON TARGET.
AND IS IT JUST ME OR HAS IT BECOME BUMPIER?
I FEEL QUITE NAUSEOUS AFTER SOME 'PORTS. I DON'T THINK IT'S JUST MY IMAGINATION.
FAITH IN FAKES
travels in hyperreality
BY UMBERTO ECO
THE SPIKE SEES WHAT'S GOIN' DOWN HERE. ONLY THING KEEPING HER SKINNY BUTT IN THE TEAM IS HER REP.
'PORTING AIN'T NO BIG DEAL. MUST BE MILLIONS OF 'PORTING MUTANTS WE COULD CHOOSE FROM. THEY'RE CRAWLING OUT OF THE DAMN WOODWORK, MAN.
LISTEN TO THE MAN. IN THE TEAM FIVE SECONDS AND PASSING JUDGMENT ON SOMEONE WHO'S PROVED SHE CAN DO IT WHEN IT REALLY COUNTS.
'S 'RIGHT, YOU KEEP ROOTIN' FOR YOUR WHITE BUDDIES.


YOU'RE IN THE TEAM NOW, SPIKE. SO IF YOU COULD DISPENSE WITH THE BLACKER-THAN-THOU NONSENSE.
MAYBE I'LL DISPENSE WID YOU INSTEAD.
AND TRY TO BE A LITTLE LESS PREDICTABLE WITH YOUR THREATS.

THE SPIKE HAS A POINT.
HE GOTTA LOTTA POINTS.
NONE OF US CAN BE ALLOWED TO REST ON OUR REPUTATIONS. ONE MORE OFF-DAY MIGHT KILL US ALL.

SO WHAT ARE YOU SUGGESTING?
THAT I DROP DOWN TO A LOWER LEAGUE?
OR MAYBE I SHOULD STAY AT HOME COOKING AND CLEANING WHILE YOU'RE OUT SAVING THE WORLD?

I'M SAYING THAT YOU HAVE A WEEK TO GET YOUR TELEPORTING RIGHT.


ONE WEEK OR YOU'RE OUT.
DoP

NO PROBLEM.

COME IN, EDIE.

I HAVEN'T KNOCKED YET.
YOU'VE BEEN OUT THERE FOR ALMOST FIVE MINUTES.
YOU CAN FEEL THAT?
WHAT DO YOU WANT?

ABOUT THIS STUPID TEST.
WE HAVE TO FIND OUT WHAT THE PROBLEM IS AND IF WE CAN SOLVE IT.

WE KNOW WHAT THE PROBLEM IS!

WE DO?

THIS IS SO TYPICAL OF YOU. YOU CAN DETECT A GIRL'S BLOOD PRESSURE THROUGH A THICK DOOR, BUT YOU CAN'T SEE WHAT'S STARING YOU IN THE FACE.

IT'S ALL THIS EMOTIONAL AMBIGUITY. WILL WE OR WON'T WE? WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON BETWEEN US? IS THIS A GAME... OR SOMETHING LESS IMPORTANT?
MAYBE WE SHOULD... DO IT THEN.

DO IT?
JUST... DO IT AND GET IT OUT OF THE WAY.

SO, WE'RE FINALLY DOING IT.
WE CAN CALL TIME-OUT IF IT GETS TOO UNCOMFORTABLE.
ROUTE US 66
MOTEL
NAH. NOW I'VE STARTED TALKING ABOUT IT. . . WE SHOULD GO ALL THE WAY.
IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I'VE TRAVELLED THIS FAR BY CAR.
I KNOW IT TAKES TIME, BUT WE COULDN'T RELY ON YOUR 'PORTING US DOWN HERE.
I'M NOT COMPLAINING. IT FEELS GOOD. IT FEELS. . . RIGHT.
THIS WAY GIVES YOU TIME TO THINK ABOUT THINGS. TO GET A SENSE OF THE WORLD. IT'S MADE ME APPRECIATE JUST HOW FAR I'VE TRAVELLED.
KATE. . .
THE LITTLE GIRL WE SAW AT THE FARM. . .
SHE IS YOUR. . .?
YEAH. YEAH, SHE IS. . .BUT TO KNOW WHAT IT ALL MEANS, WE'VE GOT TO GO BACK FURTHER. . .TO ANOTHER LITTLE GIRL.

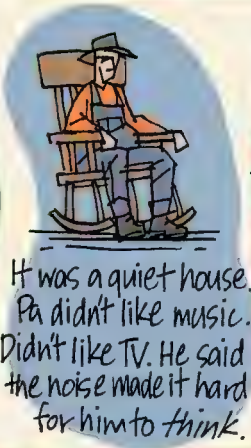
Edie Constance Sawyer.

Listening to the branches of the willow tree tip-tapping on the window.
Wishing I was somewhere—anywhere—else.

I was about twelve when it started. I'd go to sleep in my bed and wake up in the strangest places.

They put it down to sleepwalking.

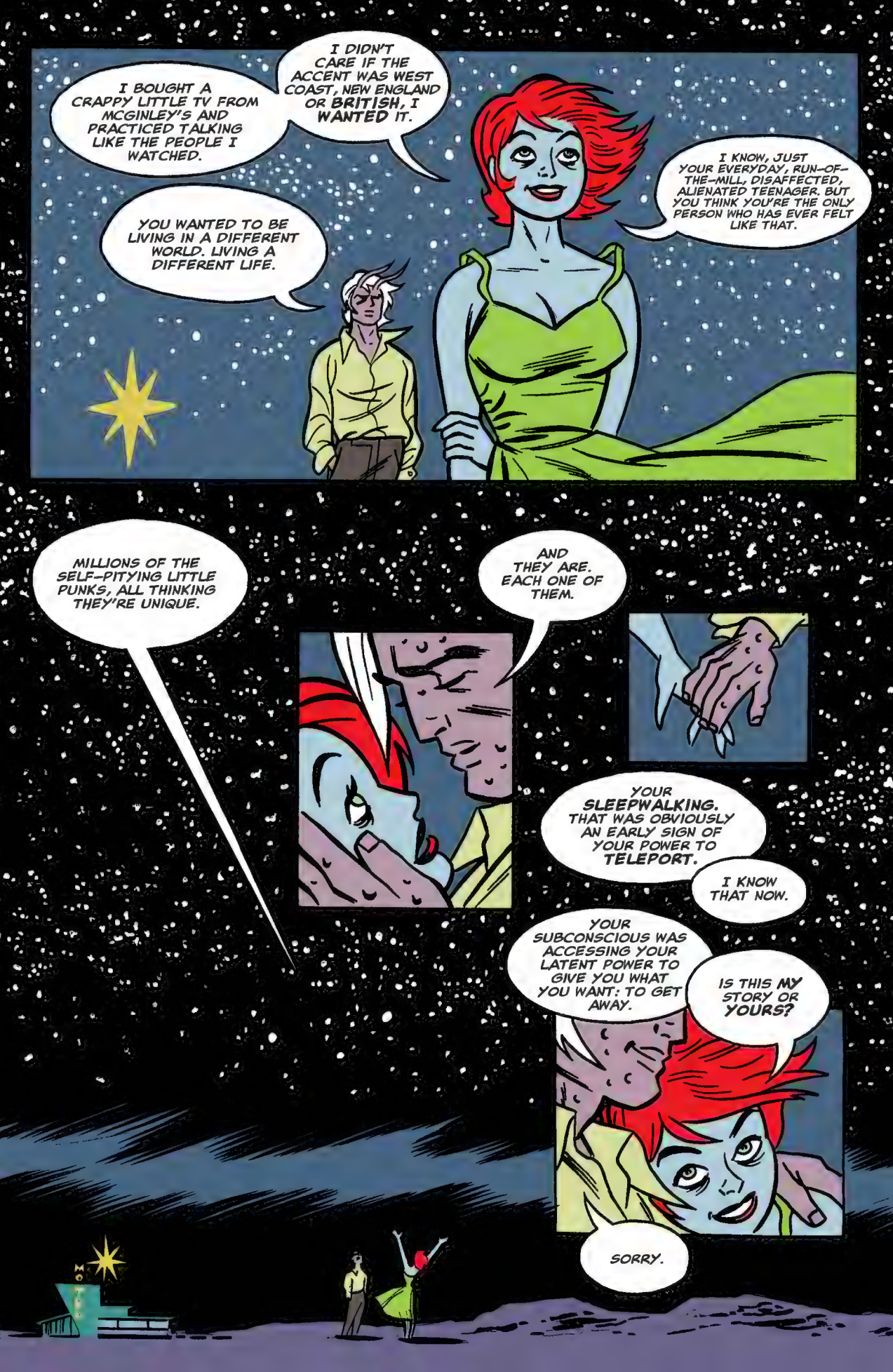
Ma was worried about it but the doctor said I'd grow out of it. I hoped I didn't.
SUPERBEAT


It was a quiet house. Pa didn't like music. Didn't like TV. He said the noise made it hard for him to think.

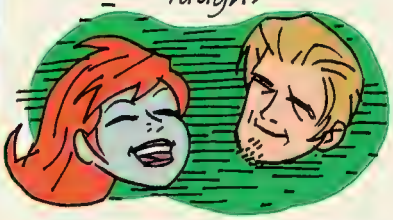
But what the hell did he think about?

I'd catch him sometimes looking at me like I was a stranger who'd just walked through the door.
FLAKES

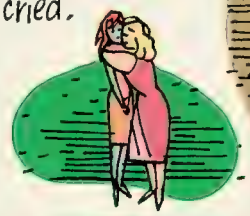
Which is pretty much how I felt.


I BOUGHT A CRAPPY LITTLE TV FROM MCGINLEY'S AND PRACTICED TALKING LIKE THE PEOPLE I WATCHED.
I DIDN'T CARE IF THE ACCENT WAS WEST COAST, NEW ENGLAND OR BRITISH, I WANTED IT.
YOU WANTED TO BE LIVING IN A DIFFERENT WORLD. LIVING A DIFFERENT LIFE.
I KNOW, JUST YOUR EVERYDAY, RUN-OF-THE-MILL, DISAFFECTED, ALIENATED TEENAGER. BUT YOU THINK YOU'RE THE ONLY PERSON WHO HAS EVER FELT LIKE THAT.
MILLIONS OF THE SELF-PITYING LITTLE PUNKS, ALL THINKING THEY'RE UNIQUE.
AND THEY ARE. EACH ONE OF THEM.
YOUR SLEEPWALKING. THAT WAS OBVIOUSLY AN EARLY SIGN OF YOUR POWER TO TELEPORT.
I KNOW THAT NOW.
YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS WAS ACCESSING YOUR LATENT POWER TO GIVE YOU WHAT YOU WANT: TO GET AWAY.
IS THIS MY STORY OR YOURS?
SORRY.

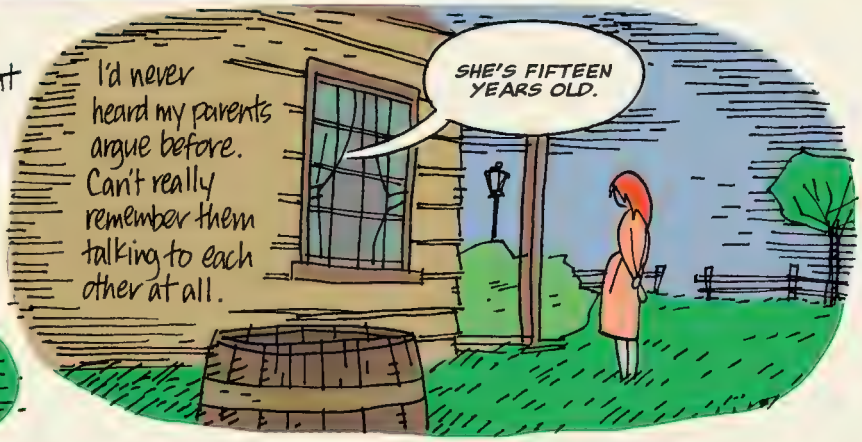
He was from San Francisco. Seventeen years old, passing through, and he made me laugh.

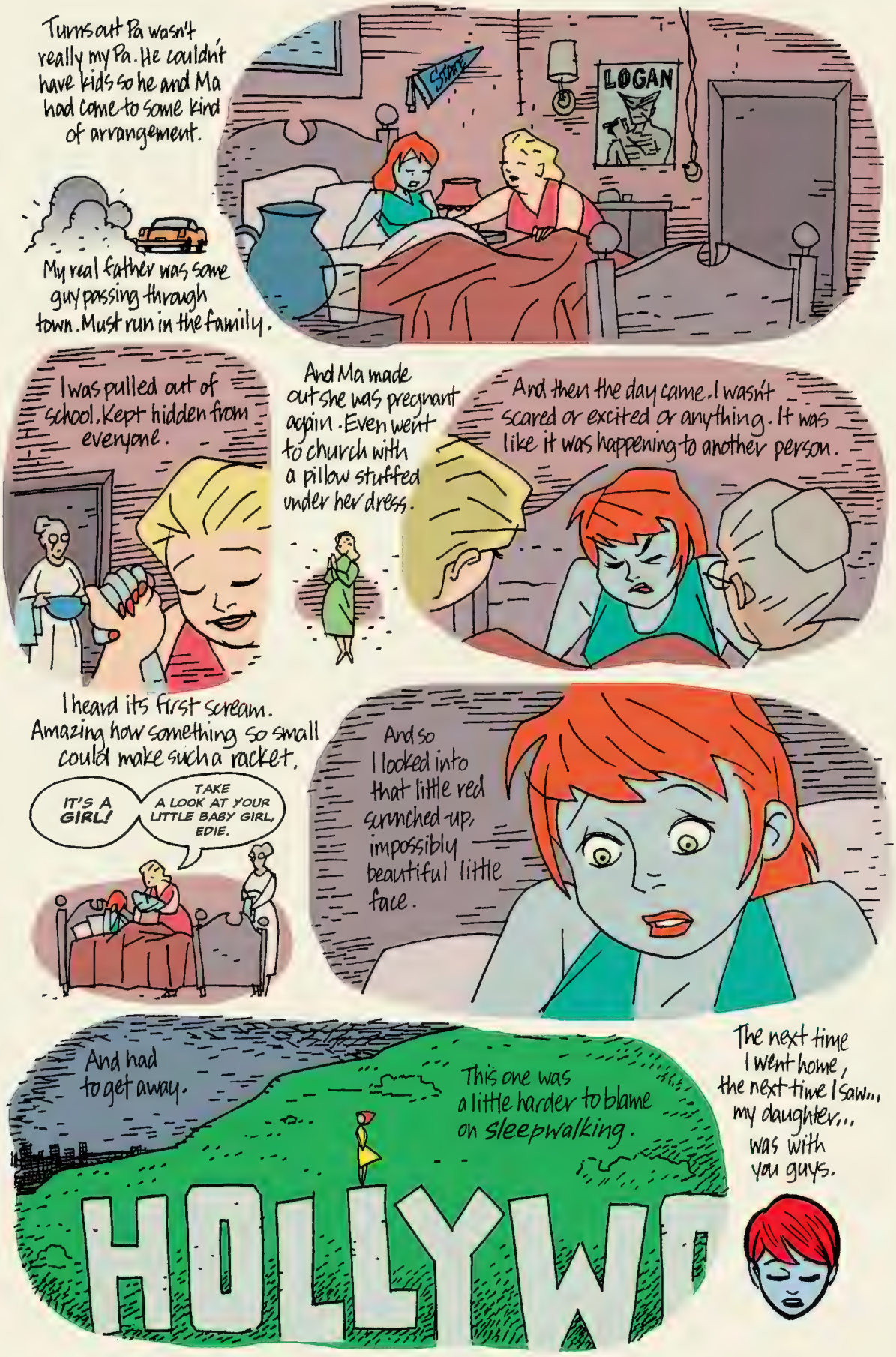


When I couldn't hide it any more, I thought they'd kick me out. Maybe I wanted them to. But Ma just held me and cried.

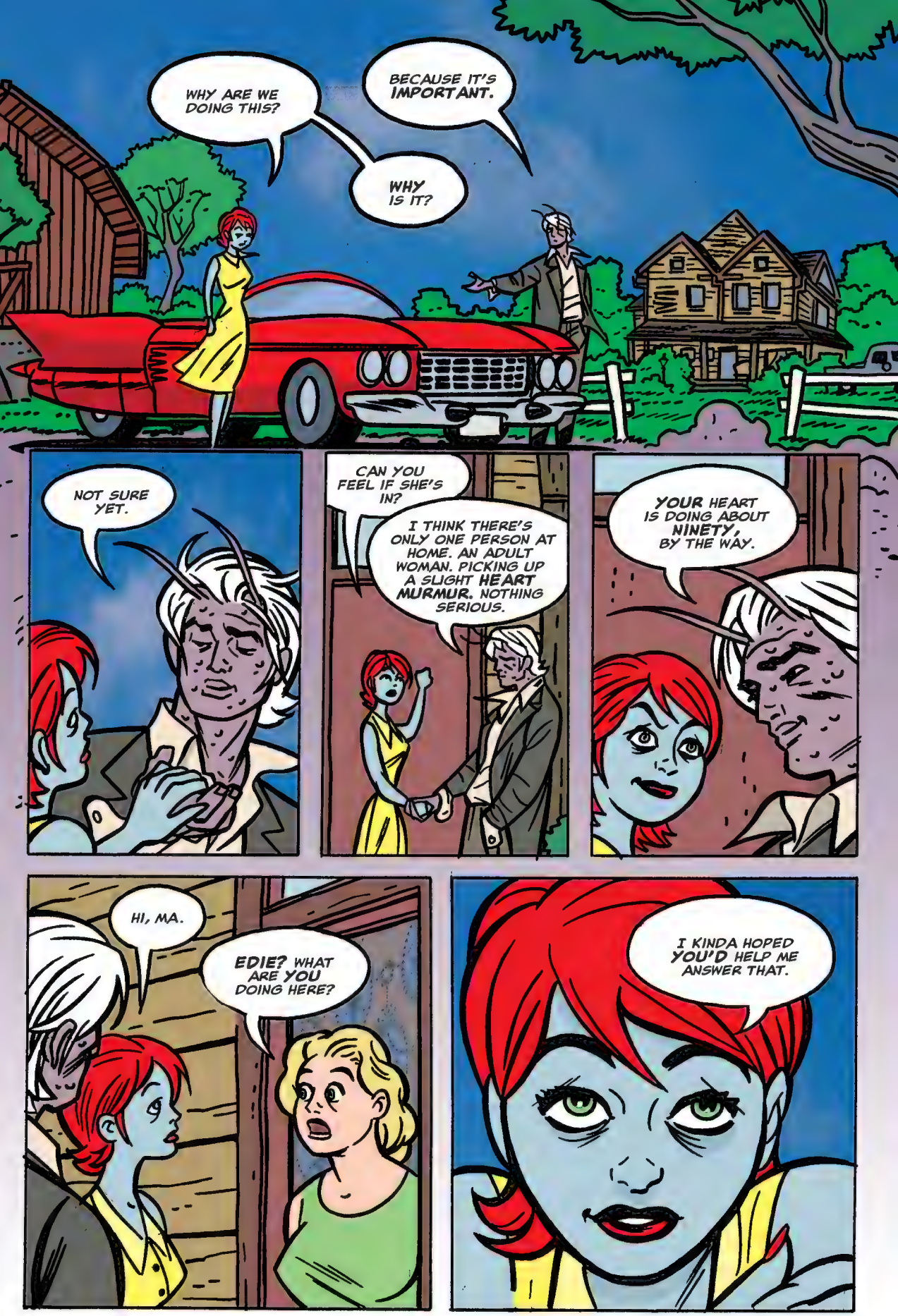


I'd never heard my parents argue before. Can't really remember them talking to each other at all.



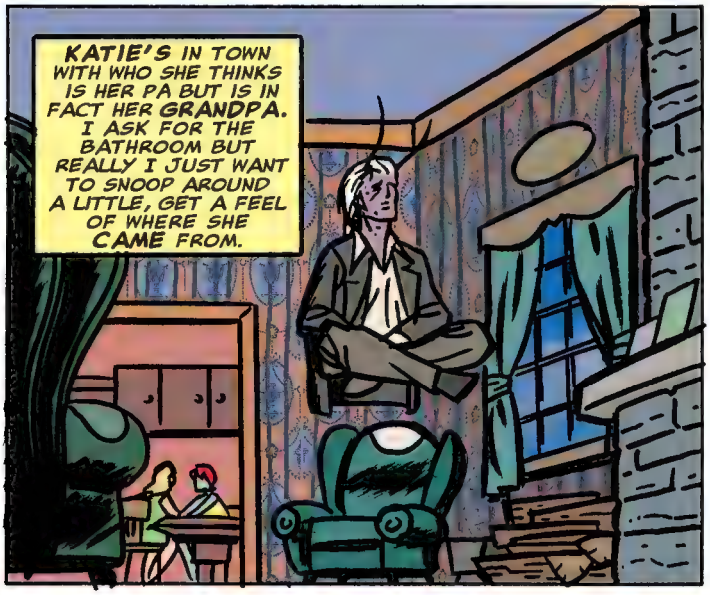

Turns out Pa wasn't really my Pa. He couldn't have kids so he and Ma had come to some kind of arrangement.
LOGAN
My real father was some guy passing through town. Must run in the family.
I was pulled out of school. Kept hidden from everyone.
And Ma made out she was pregnant again. Even went to church with a pillow stuffed under her dress.
And then the day came. I wasn't scared or excited or anything. It was like it was happening to another person.
I heard its first scream. Amazing how something so small could make such a racket.
IT'S A GIRL!
TAKE A LOOK AT YOUR LITTLE BABY GIRL, EDIE.
And so I looked into that little red scrunched-up, impossibly beautiful little face.
And had to get away.
This one was a little harder to blame on sleepwalking.
The next time I went home, the next time I saw... my daughter... was with you guys.
HOLLYW

EDIE. . . YOU ASLEEP?
NOT EVEN CLOSE.
MOTU
THESE WALLS ARE REAL THIN.
I KNOW. I CAN HEAR YOU BREATHING.
YOU CAN?
AND I CAN FEEL THE BEAT OF YOUR HEART VIBRATING DOWN THE WALL. IT'S A LITTLE FAST. WHAT ARE YOU FRETTING ABOUT?
I DON'T WANT TO GO HOME TOMORROW. I DON'T WANT TO SEE THEM ALL AGAIN. I'VE TOLD YOU EVERYTHING THERE IS TO KNOW.
TOO BAD. WE'RE GOING.
YOU CAN BE SO ANNOYING.
I KNOW.


WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?
BECAUSE IT'S IMPORTANT.
WHY IS IT?
NOT SURE YET.
CAN YOU FEEL IF SHE'S IN?
I THINK THERE'S ONLY ONE PERSON AT HOME. AN ADULT WOMAN. PICKING UP A SLIGHT HEART MURMUR. NOTHING SERIOUS.
YOUR HEART IS DOING ABOUT NINETY, BY THE WAY.
HI, MA.
EDIE? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
I KINDA HOPED YOU'D HELP ME ANSWER THAT.

THEY TALK AND CRY AND TALK AND. . .

. . . YOU GET THE GENERAL IDEA.

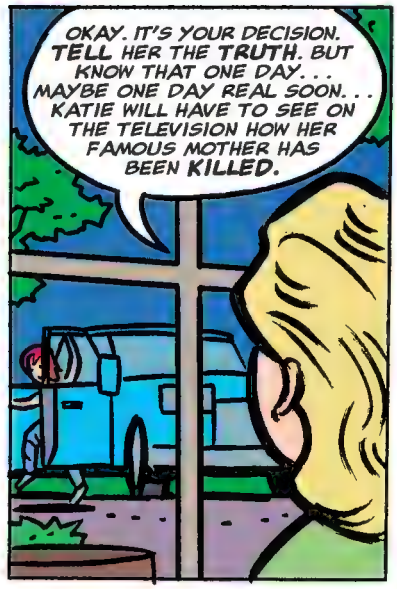

KATIE'S IN TOWN WITH WHO SHE THINKS IS HER PA BUT IS IN FACT HER GRANDPA. I ASK FOR THE BATHROOM BUT REALLY I JUST WANT TO SNOOP AROUND A LITTLE, GET A FEEL OF WHERE SHE CAME FROM.

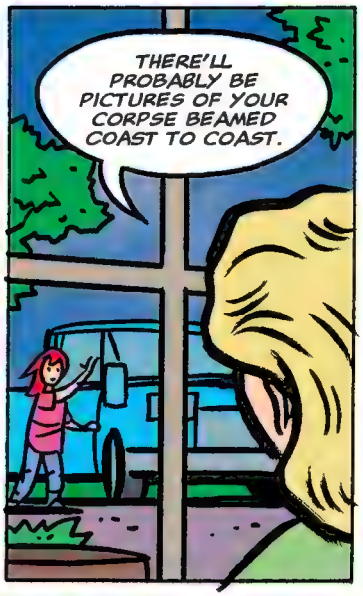
I CAN SMELL THE DUST AND SWEAT OF GENERATIONS IN THIS HOUSE. COUNTLESS HARDY, HONEST-TO-GOODNESS MEALS.

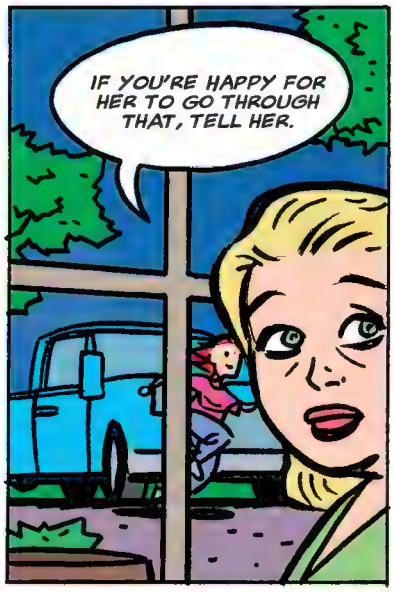
THE WONDERS OF AMERICAN DENTISTRY.

I WANT HER TO KNOW WHO HER REAL MOTHER IS.
SHE'S HAPPY AND SETTLED WITH THINGS AS THEY ARE. WHAT GOOD WILL IT DO TELLING HER?

THERE HAVE BEEN TOO MANY LIES IN THIS FAMILY. THERE'VE BEEN TOO MANY LIES IN MY LIFE.
MAYBE THAT'S WHY I'M NOT FUNCTIONING PROPERLY. MAYBE THAT'S WHY I CAME HERE. I DON'T WANT TO DENY THE TRUTH ANY LONGER.


OKAY. IT'S YOUR DECISION. TELL HER THE TRUTH. BUT KNOW THAT ONE DAY... MAYBE ONE DAY REAL SOON... KATIE WILL HAVE TO SEE ON THE TELEVISION HOW HER FAMOUS MOTHER HAS BEEN KILLED.


THERE'LL PROBABLY BE PICTURES OF YOUR CORPSE BEAMED COAST TO COAST.

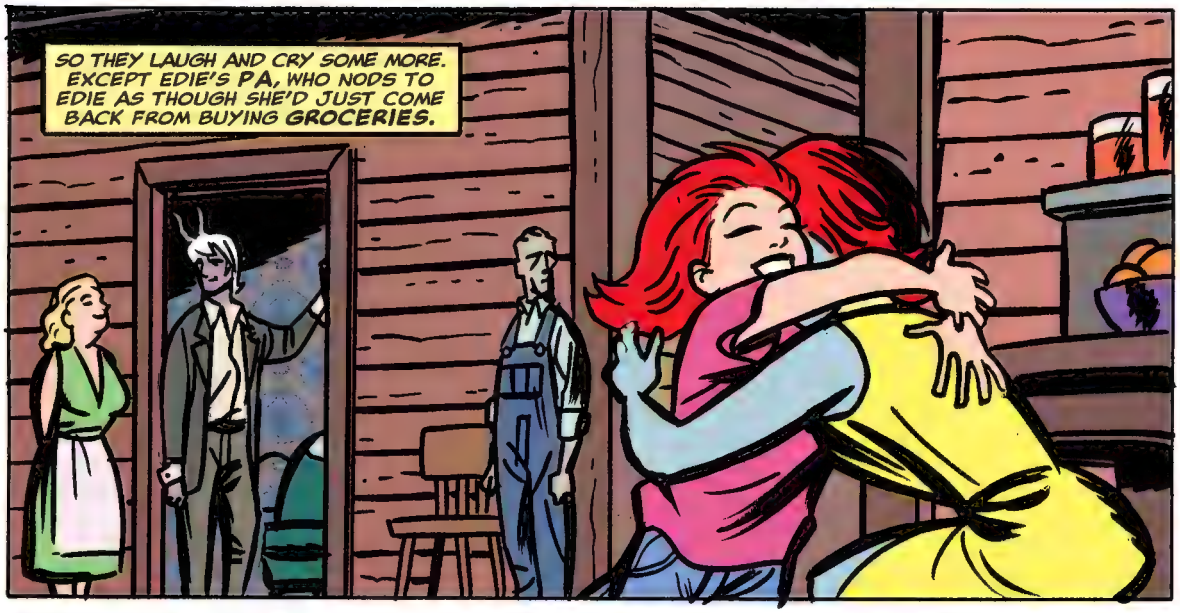

IF YOU'RE HAPPY FOR HER TO GO THROUGH THAT, TELL HER.

HEY, MA!

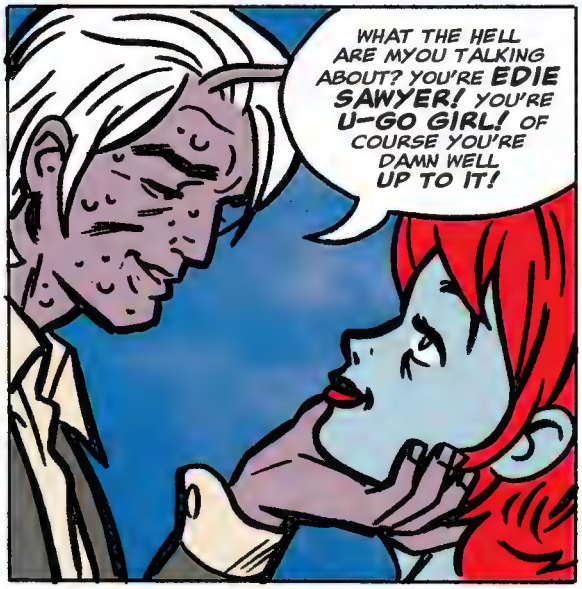
WHOSE CAR IS THAT IN THE YAR—?

WELL . . AIN'T YOU GOT A HUG FOR YOUR. . .

. . . BIG SISTER?


SO THEY LAUGH AND CRY SOME MORE. EXCEPT EDIE'S PA, WHO NODS TO EDIE AS THOUGH SHE'D JUST COME BACK FROM BUYING GROCERIES.

KATIE. . . KATIE WANTS ME TO TAKE HER 'PORTING. . .
I DON'T WANT TO DISAPPOINT HER BUT. . . JEEZ, GUY. . . I'M NOT SURE IF I'M UP TO IT.


WHAT THE HELL ARE MYOU TALKING ABOUT? YOU'RE EDIE SAWYER! YOU'RE U-GO GIRL! OF COURSE YOU'RE DAMN WELL UP TO IT!

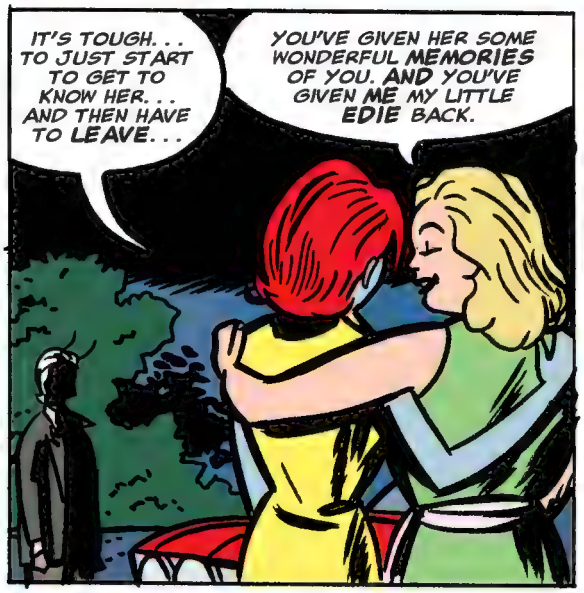
SO. . . HOW AM I DOING?
JUST FINE, EDIE. JUST FINE.

WHY AM I SUCH A SUCKER FOR THESE LONG, PROTRACTED GOOD-BYES?

WHEN WILL YOU COME BACK AGAIN?
I DON'T KNOW, HONEY. I NEVER KNOW WHERE I'M GOING TO BE FROM ONE DAY TO THE NEXT.
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DIE LIKE THEM OTHER MUTANTS?

ME?
NAH. I'M INDESTRUCTIBLE.

COME ON, BOY, KEEP IT UNDER CONTROL. YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE THE LEADER OF A BADASS TEAM OF MUTANTS WHO LAUGH IN THE FACE OF DEATH.


IT'S TOUGH... TO JUST START TO GET TO KNOW HER... AND THEN HAVE TO LEAVE...
YOU'VE GIVEN HER SOME WONDERFUL MEMORIES OF YOU. AND YOU'VE GIVEN ME MY LITTLE EDIE BACK.

DAMN.
PIECE OF GRIT IN MY EYE.

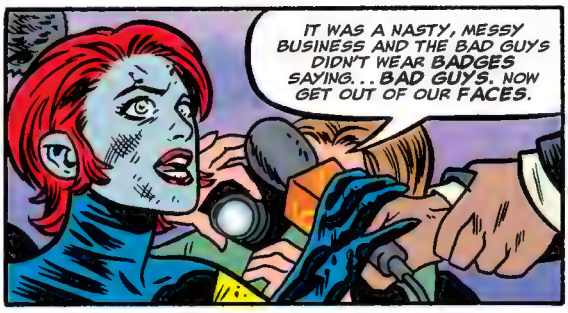
I HIT EVERY TARGET DEAD CENTER. NO WOBBLES. NO ENDING UP DROWNING IN ICE COLD WATER.
AND NOW YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME WHY I WAS ABLE TO 'PORT AGAIN.
TRY TO STOP ME.
YOUR 'PORTING BEGAN AS AN UNCONSCIOUS ATTEMPT TO FLEE FROM YOUR OLD LIFE, AND YOUR OLD SELF.
BUT THEN YOU REACHED A STAGE IN YOUR LIFE WHEN YOU DIDN'T NEED TO RUN FROM THE PAST ANYMORE. AND SO INDIRECTLY YOU'RE 'PORTING BACK TO YOUR OLD HOME. . .
THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK, SMARTY PANTS.
TRUTH IS, I PICKED UP SOME SUPER NEW CONCOCTION FROM SPIKE FREEMAN BEFORE WE LEFT. . . DOES WONDERS FOR MY CONCENTRATION! SORRY TO SPOIL YOUR POP PSYCHOLOGY CLASS.
HOWEVER YOU GOT YOUR OLD MAGIC BACK. . . COULD YOU MANAGE ONE MORE 'PORT? THIS ROAD IS GOING ON FOREVER.
WHAT DID YOU HAVE IN MIND?

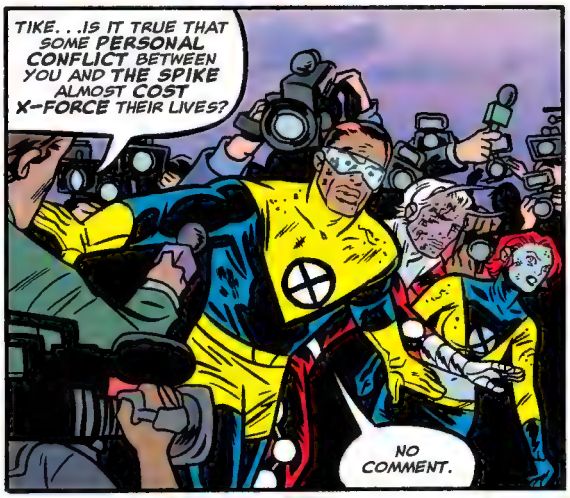
WOULD YOU HAVE REALLY THROWN ME OFF THE TEAM?
YOU KNOW ME. I WOULDN'T BE TOUGH ENOUGH TO DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
WHY NOT? IF I WAS LEADER AND YOU KEPT SCREWING UP, I WOULDN'T HESITATE TO GET RID OF YOU.
THOUGH I MIGHT... KEEP YOU AROUND THE HOUSE...
YOU KNOW, FOR PERSONAL USE.
YOU KNOW... WITH OUR LIFE EXPECTANCY, IT'D BE REALLY DUMB OF US TO GET, YOU KNOW, TOO ATTACHED TO EACH OTHER...
YOU'RE RIGHT. WE'LL HAVE TO KEEP A DETACHED AND PROFESSIONAL ATTITUDE TO WHATEVER GOES ON BETWEEN US...
RIGHT. WE'RE X-FORCE. WE CAN DRAW A DISTINCTION BETWEEN OUR PROFESSIONAL AND OUR PERSONAL LIVES...
DO YOU WANT TO TURN THE RADIO ON OR SOMETHING?
THE WALLS IN THIS PLACE ARE REAL THIN. SOMEONE MIGHT HEAR US.

I DON'T CARE IF THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD HEARS US.

X-FORCE #125

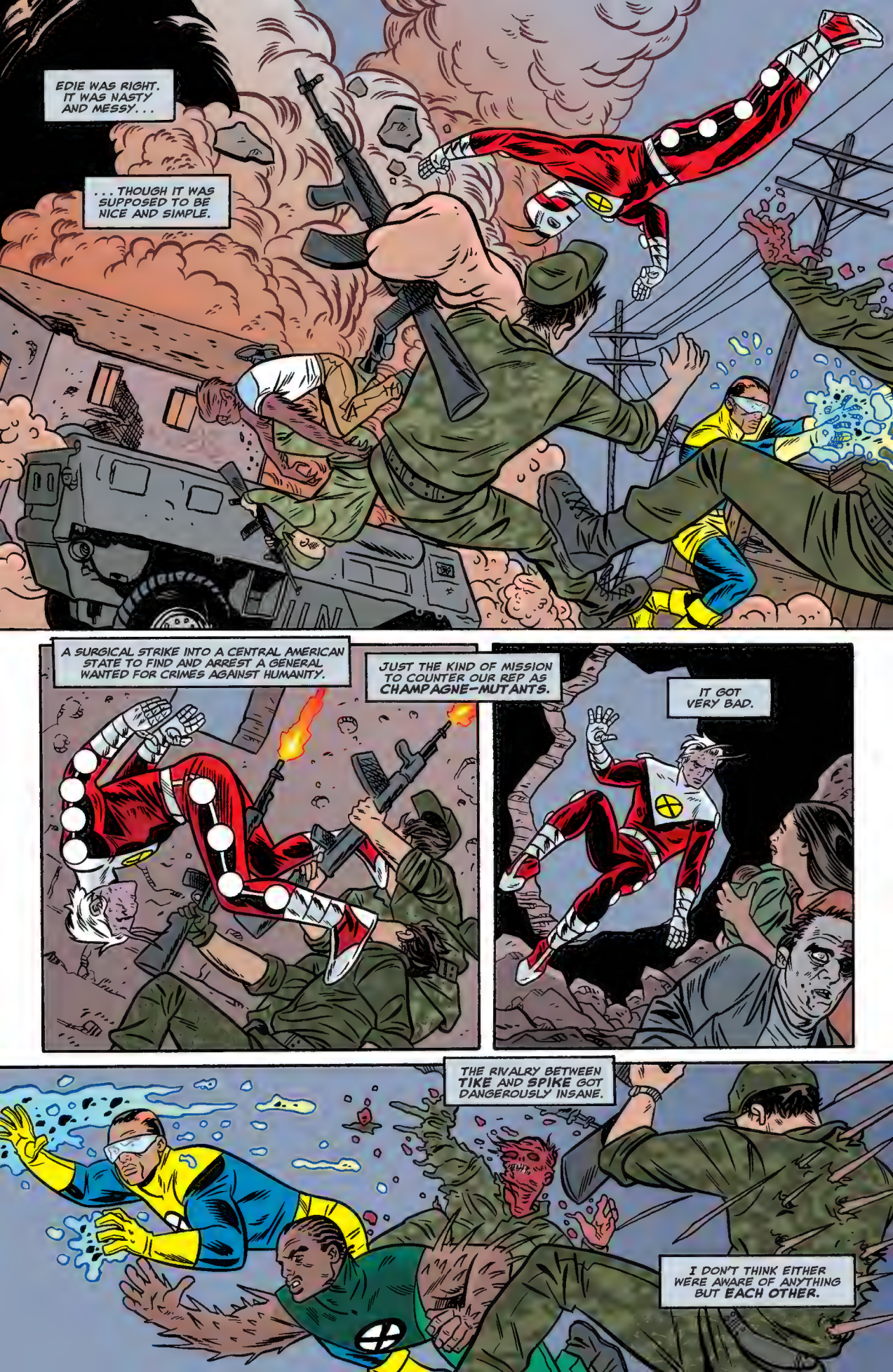
THERE ARE REPORTS OF CIVILIAN DEATHS. CAN YOU CONFIRM THIS, GUY?
HOW MANY CIVILIAN DEATHS EXACTLY?
KBBT


IT WAS A NASTY, MESSY BUSINESS AND THE BAD GUYS DIDN'T WEAR BADGES SAYING... BAD GUYS. NOW GET OUT OF OUR FACES.

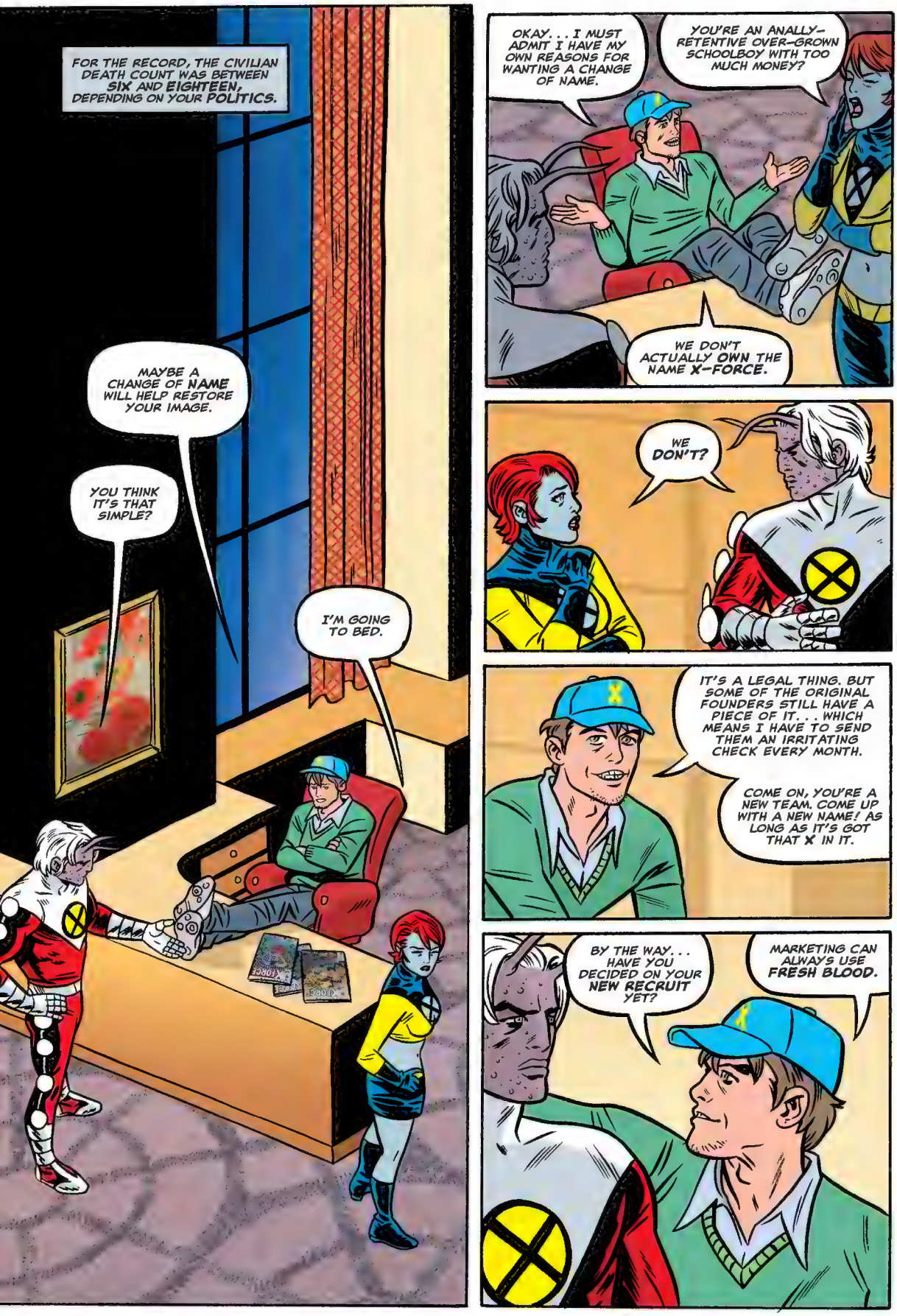

TIKE...IS IT TRUE THAT SOME PERSONAL CONFLICT BETWEEN YOU AND THE SPIKE ALMOST COST X-FORCE THEIR LIVES?
NO COMMENT.

I'M NOT SURE WHAT X-FORCE IS SUPPOSED TO STAND FOR.
MYLES...HAVE YOU EVER HAD A GIRLFRIEND?

BUT I'M PRETTY SURE IT ISN'T THIS.


EDIE WAS RIGHT. IT WAS NASTY AND MESSY...
...THOUGH IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE NICE AND SIMPLE.
A SURGICAL STRIKE INTO A CENTRAL AMERICAN STATE TO FIND AND ARREST A GENERAL WANTED FOR CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY.
JUST THE KIND OF MISSION TO COUNTER OUR REP AS CHAMPAGNE-MUTANTS.
IT GOT VERY BAD.
THE RIVALRY BETWEEN TIKE AND SPIKE GOT DANGEROUSLY INSANE.
I DON'T THINK EITHER WERE AWARE OF ANYTHING BUT EACH OTHER.

MYLES AND PHAT SEEMED INCREASINGLY ISOLATED. LIKE A TEAM WITHIN A TEAM. SOMETHING WEIRD GOING ON.
AND THEN THERE WERE EDIE AND ME.
I TRIED TO BE PROFESSIONAL BUT FOUND MYSELF GIVING HER AN ORDER PURELY TO GET HER OUT OF THE FIRING LINE.
IF YOU EVER DO THAT AGAIN WE'RE FINISHED, UNDERSTAND?
FINISHED.
I'M SORRY, EDIE, BUT...
THEN WE HAD TO STALL MOVING IN ON THE GENERAL SO THE NETWORKS COULD BE THERE TO FILM IT, TO MAKE IT REAL.
NO X-FORCE
REVOLUCION SI NO MUTANT
YANKIS GO HOME
DURING WHICH TIME WE LEARNED THAT OUR PRESENCE WASN'T AS UNANIMOUSLY WELCOMED AS WE'D BEEN LED TO BELIEVE.

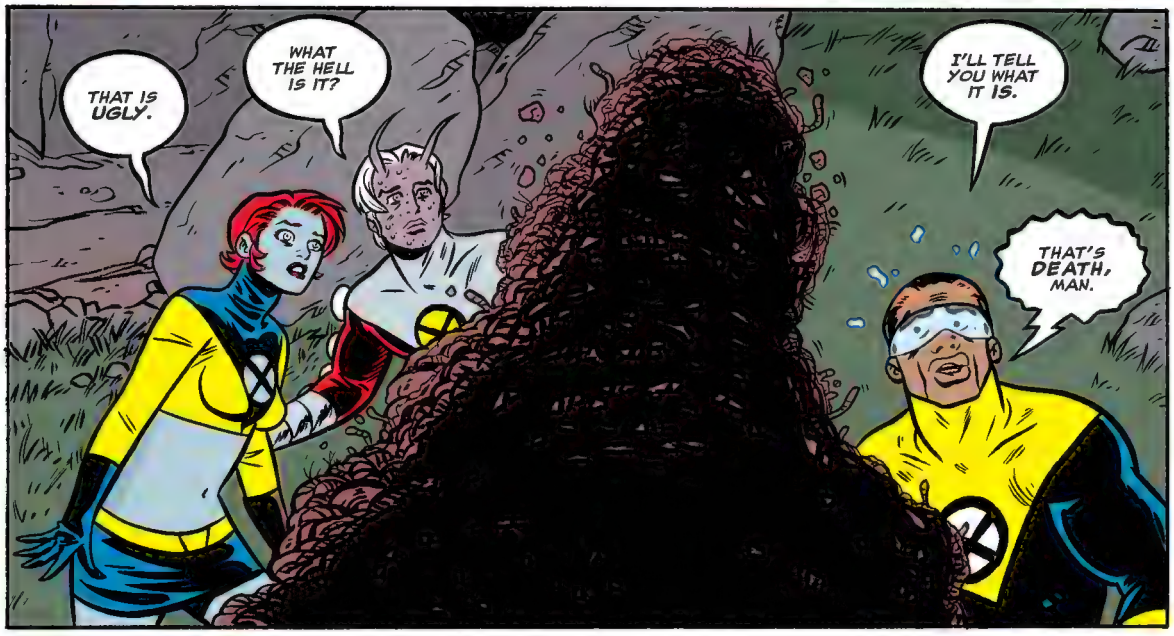

FOR THE RECORD, THE CIVILIAN DEATH COUNT WAS BETWEEN SIX AND EIGHTEEN, DEPENDING ON YOUR POLITICS.
MAYBE A CHANGE OF NAME WILL HELP RESTORE YOUR IMAGE.
YOU THINK IT'S THAT SIMPLE?
I'M GOING TO BED.
OKAY... I MUST ADMIT I HAVE MY OWN REASONS FOR WANTING A CHANGE OF NAME.
YOU'RE AN ANALLY-RETENTIVE OVER-GROWN SCHOOLBOY WITH TOO MUCH MONEY?
WE DON'T ACTUALLY OWN THE NAME X-FORCE.
WE DON'T?
IT'S A LEGAL THING. BUT SOME OF THE ORIGINAL FOUNDERS STILL HAVE A PIECE OF IT... WHICH MEANS I HAVE TO SEND THEM AN IRRITATING CHECK EVERY MONTH.
COME ON, YOU'RE A NEW TEAM. COME UP WITH A NEW NAME! AS LONG AS IT'S GOT THAT X IN IT.
BY THE WAY... HAVE YOU DECIDED ON YOUR NEW RECRUIT YET?
MARKETING CAN ALWAYS USE FRESH BLOOD.

STAN LEE PRESENTS
ONE OF US
HOW ABOUT... X-DIVISION?
SOUNDS A LITTLE... FASCIST.
X-HEROES?
POMPOUS.
IT'S IRONIC.
IRONICALLY POMPOUS.
Peter Milligan Writer
M.D. Allred
Laura Allred Colorist
Joe Quesada CHIEF
Bill Jemas President
Axel Alonso

AH, HELLO? DEAD GIRL? THIS IS GUY SMITH, THE ORPHAN, FROM X-FORCE.
CONGRATULATIONS! YOU'VE BEEN CHOSEN AS OUR NEW RECRUIT!

DO YOU WANT TO COME BACK TO L.A. WITH US... OR DO YOU HAVE SOME PEOPLE YOU WANT TO SAY GOODBYE TO?

SILENT AS A GRAVE.
NOT FUNNY, EDIE.
MAYBE SHE NEEDS WARMING UP.
MAYBE YOU GUYS NEED TO LOOK AT THIS.


THAT IS UGLY.
WHAT THE HELL IS IT?
I'LL TELL YOU WHAT IT IS.
THAT'S DEATH, MAN.

IT SEEMS TO BE MADE OF... MUD. AND STONE.
AND BONES. SKULLS. AND LOOK: PARTS OF IT ARE MOVING.
WORMS. MAGGOTS.

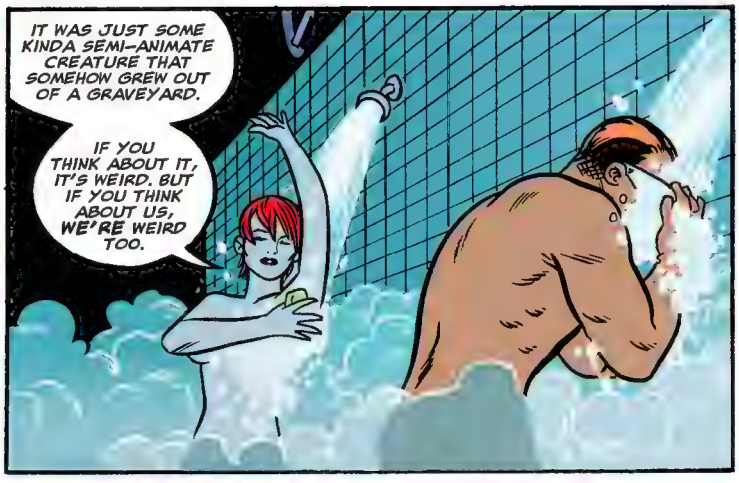
WHAT'S IT DOING?
DUNNO. . . BUT BE READY TO GET US OUT OF HERE, EDIE.
I AM VERY READY.

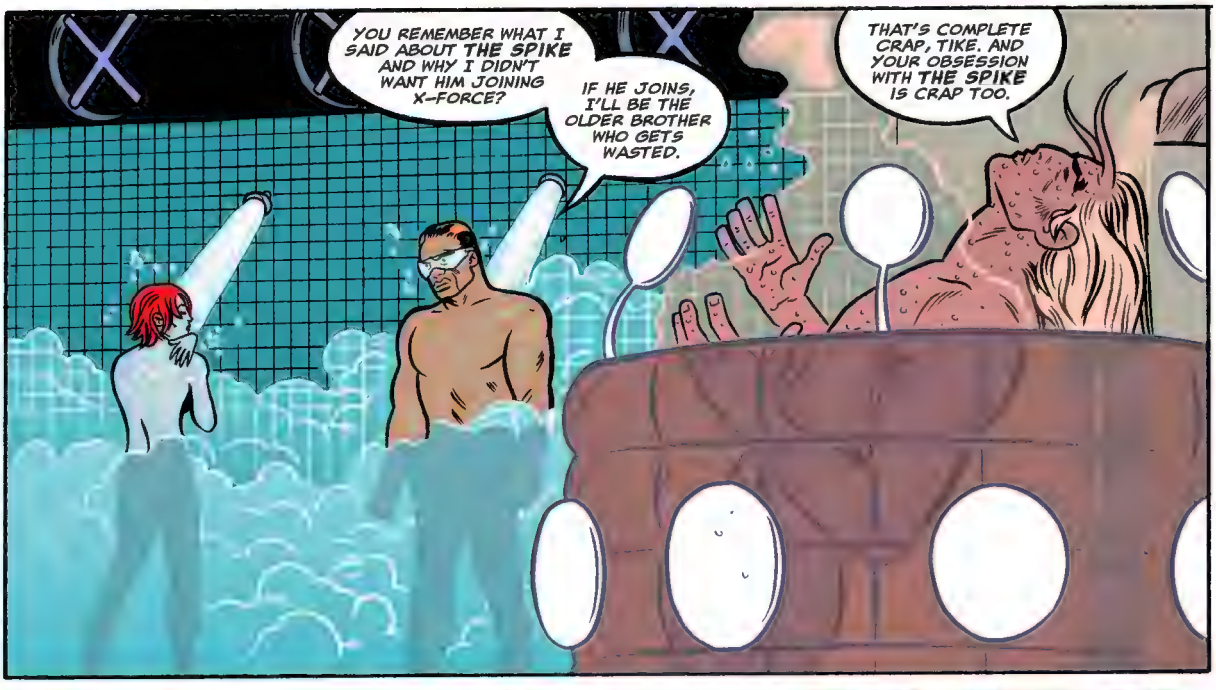
IT'S POINTING. DEATH IS POINTING.
STRAIGHT AT ME!

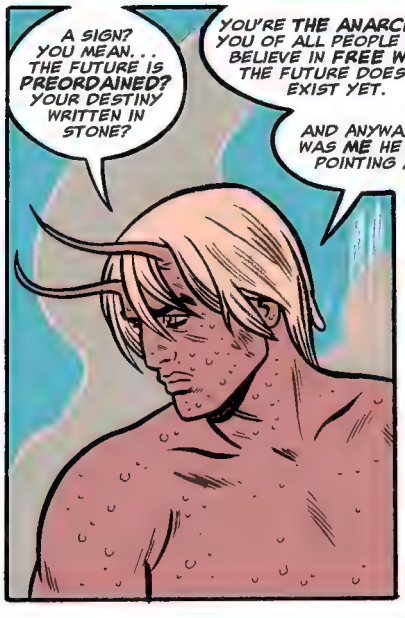
HELL, NO, IT'S POINTING AT ME!
YOU'RE BOTH WRONG. . . IT'S ME.
I KNOW WHEN I'M BEING POINTED AT.

KABOOSH

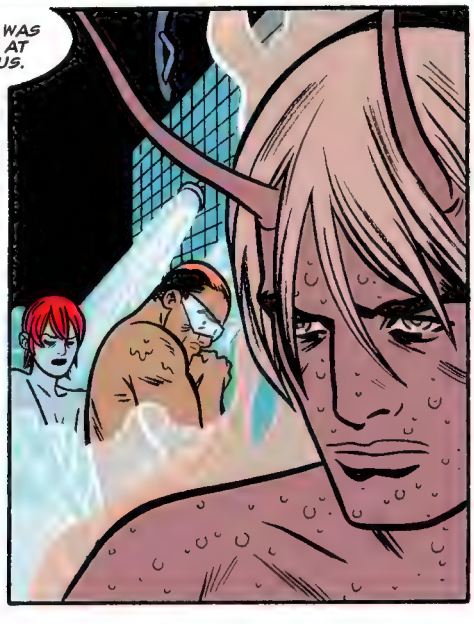
IT WAS A... A SIGN.

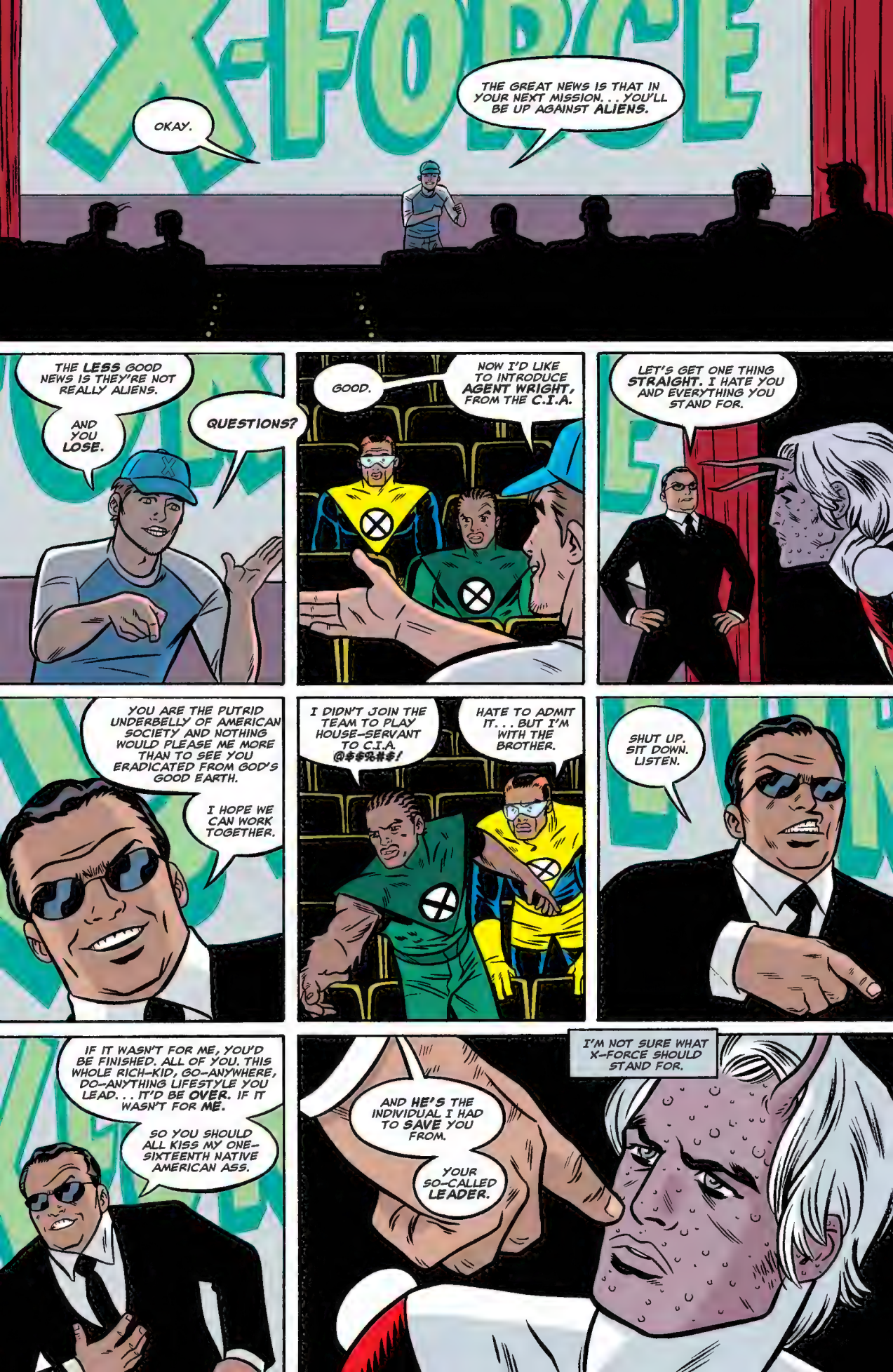

IT WAS JUST SOME KINDA SEMI-ANIMATE CREATURE THAT SOMEHOW GREW OUT OF A GRAVEYARD.
IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT, IT'S WEIRD. BUT IF YOU THINK ABOUT US, WE'RE WEIRD TOO.


YOU REMEMBER WHAT I SAID ABOUT THE SPIKE AND WHY I DIDN'T WANT HIM JOINING X-FORCE?
IF HE JOINS, I'LL BE THE OLDER BROTHER WHO GETS WASTED.
THAT'S COMPLETE CRAP, TIKE. AND YOUR OBSESSION WITH THE SPIKE IS CRAP TOO.

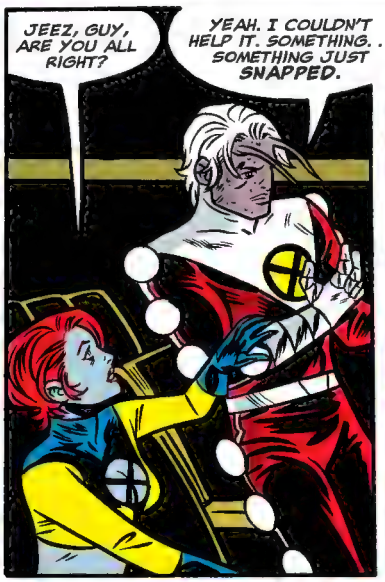

A SIGN? YOU MEAN... THE FUTURE IS PREORDAINED? YOUR DESTINY WRITTEN IN STONE?
YOU'RE THE ANARCHIST. YOU OF ALL PEOPLE MUST BELIEVE IN FREE WILL. THE FUTURE DOESN'T EXIST YET.
AND ANYWAY. IT WAS ME HE WAS POINTING AT.

MAYBE HE WAS POINTING AT ALL OF US.




X-FORCE
OKAY.
THE GREAT NEWS IS THAT IN YOUR NEXT MISSION... YOU'LL BE UP AGAINST ALIENS.
THE LESS GOOD NEWS IS THEY'RE NOT REALLY ALIENS.
AND YOU LOSE.
QUESTIONS?
GOOD.
NOW I'D LIKE TO INTRODUCE AGENT WRIGHT, FROM THE C.I.A.
LET'S GET ONE THING STRAIGHT. I HATE YOU AND EVERYTHING YOU STAND FOR.
YOU ARE THE PUTRID UNDERBELLY OF AMERICAN SOCIETY AND NOTHING WOULD PLEASE ME MORE THAN TO SEE YOU ERADICATED FROM GOD'S GOOD EARTH.
I HOPE WE CAN WORK TOGETHER.
I DIDN'T JOIN THE TEAM TO PLAY HOUSE-SERVANT TO C.I.A. @$%#$!
HATE TO ADMIT IT... BUT I'M WITH THE BROTHER.
SHUT UP. SIT DOWN. LISTEN.
IF IT WASN'T FOR ME, YOU'D BE FINISHED. ALL OF YOU. THIS WHOLE RICH-KID, GO-ANYWHERE, DO-ANYTHING LIFESTYLE YOU LEAD... IT'D BE OVER. IF IT WASN'T FOR ME.
SO YOU SHOULD ALL KISS MY ONE-SIXTEENTH NATIVE AMERICAN ASS.
I'M NOT SURE WHAT X-FORCE SHOULD STAND FOR.
AND HE'S THE INDIVIDUAL I HAD TO SAVE YOU FROM.
YOUR SO-CALLED LEADER.

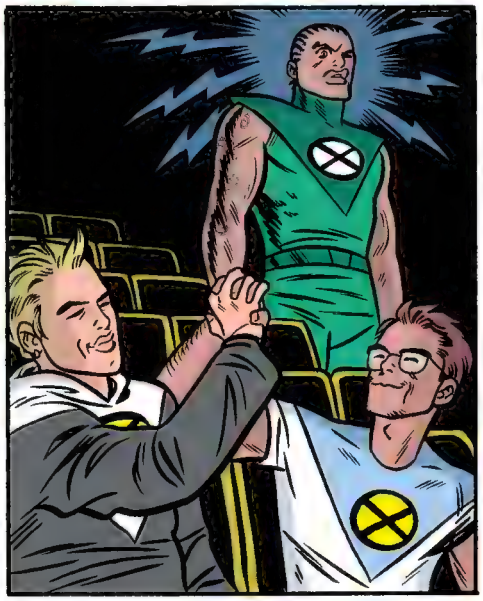
SMAK
GETTING LESS SURE BY THE MINUTE.


JEEZ, GUY, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
YEAH. I COULDN'T HELP IT. SOMETHING... SOMETHING JUST SNAPPED.

SURE AS HELL SOMETHING SNAPPED. HIS LILY-LIVERED, BLEEDING-HEART MUTANT BACKBONE IS WHAT SNAPPED.
HE AIN'T A MAN. HE'S A JELLY-FISH.

JELLYFISH DON'T HAVE BACKBONES.
YOU SHOULD BE MORE CAREFUL WHO YOU'RE MIXING IT WITH.
I... I WAS MIXING A METAPHOR.
EDIE... LEAVE IT!

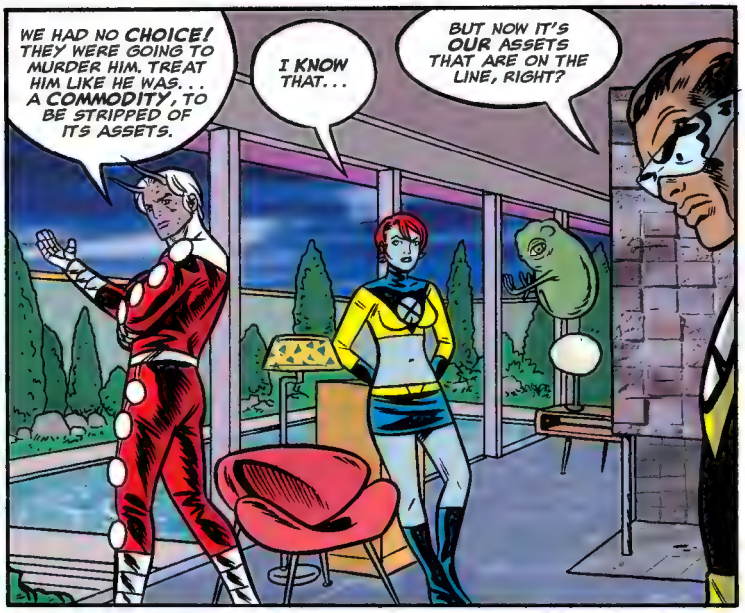
HOW ABOUT... THE X-FOLIATES?
PHAT, CAN ANYTHING BE TOO GAY?
BRO, AIN'T THAT A LITTLE TOO GAY?



LISTEN GOOD, C.I.A AGENT WRIGHT. YOU MIGHT THINK WE'RE A BUNCH OF TINSEL-TOWN LIGHTWEIGHTS THAT YOU CAN PUSH AROUND...
BUT IF YOU DO ANYTHING TO HARM GUY SMITH YOU WILL HAVE ME TO CONTEND WITH.
PLEASE, DEAR GOD, PLEASE, WE'RE FALLING!

AND THOUGH I LOOK CUTE... I AM CAPABLE OF ACTS OF SUCH TERRIBLE VIOLENCE... THAT IT SCARES ME.
PLEASE... I DON'T WANT TO DIE!
LIKE EVERYONE ELSE DOES?
AAIEEEE!
DO I MAKE MYSELF CLEAR? OR WOULD YOU LIKE MORE TIME ON YOUR OWN TO THINK IT THROUGH?
IF YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT GUY SMITH... YOU SHOULD BE THANKING ME.
HOW DO YOU WORK THAT OUT?

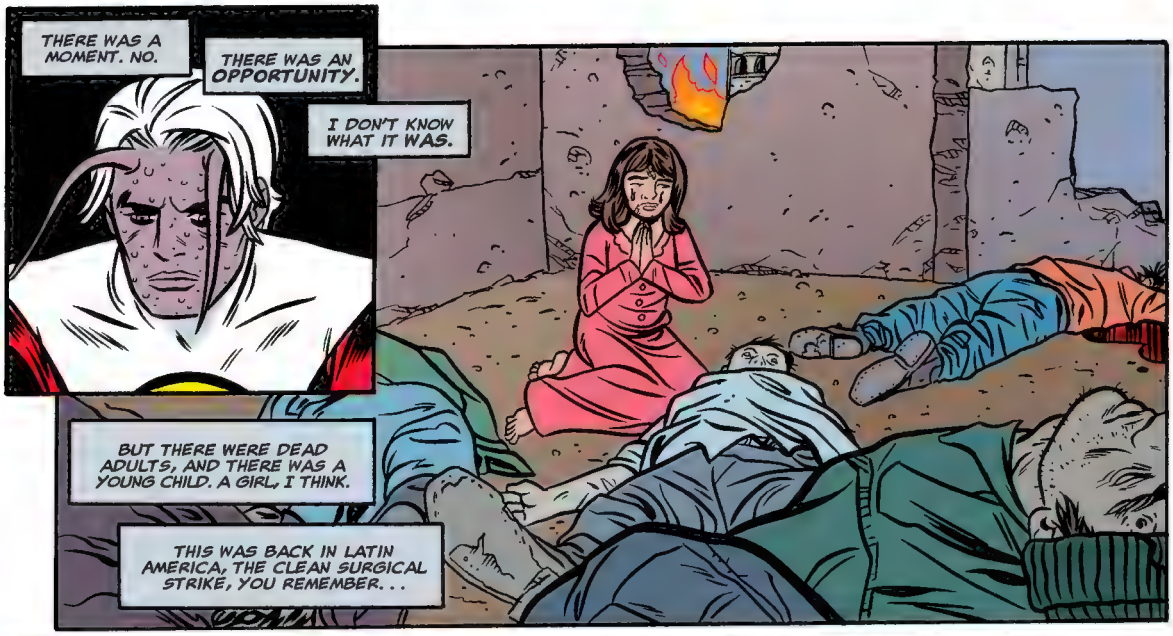
IT SEEMS SOME REAL POWERFUL MULTINATIONAL PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES ARE... UPSET THAT YOU DIDN'T HAND LITTLE PACO PEREZ OVER TO THEM.

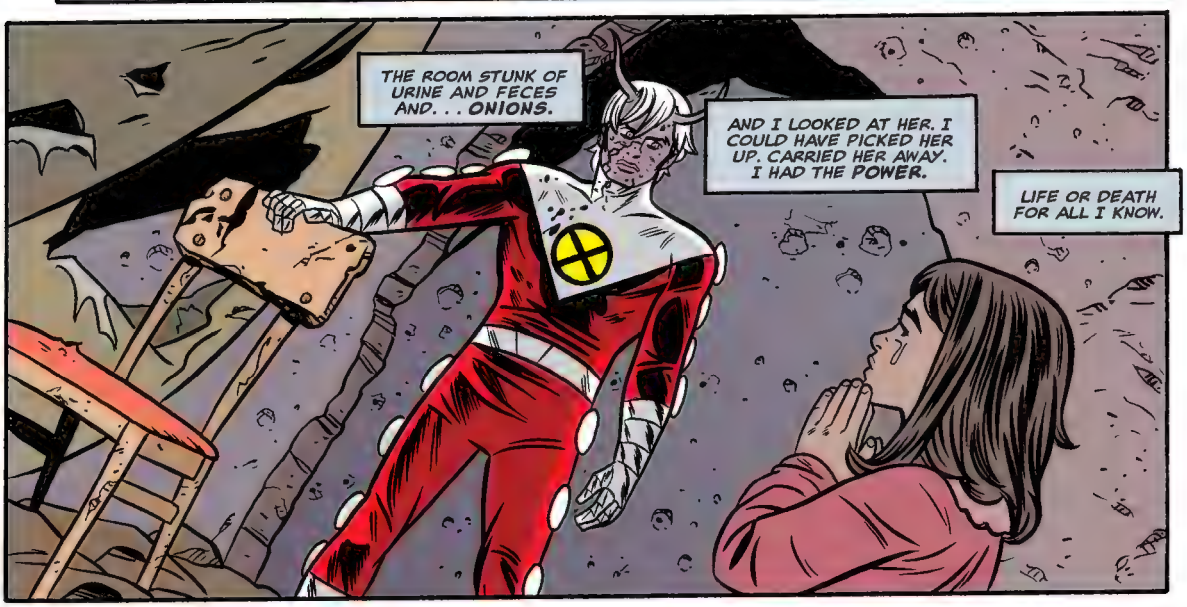

WE HAD NO CHOICE! THEY WERE GOING TO MURDER HIM. TREAT HIM LIKE HE WAS... A COMMODITY, TO BE STRIPPED OF ITS ASSETS.
I KNOW THAT...
BUT NOW IT'S OUR ASSETS THAT ARE ON THE LINE, RIGHT?

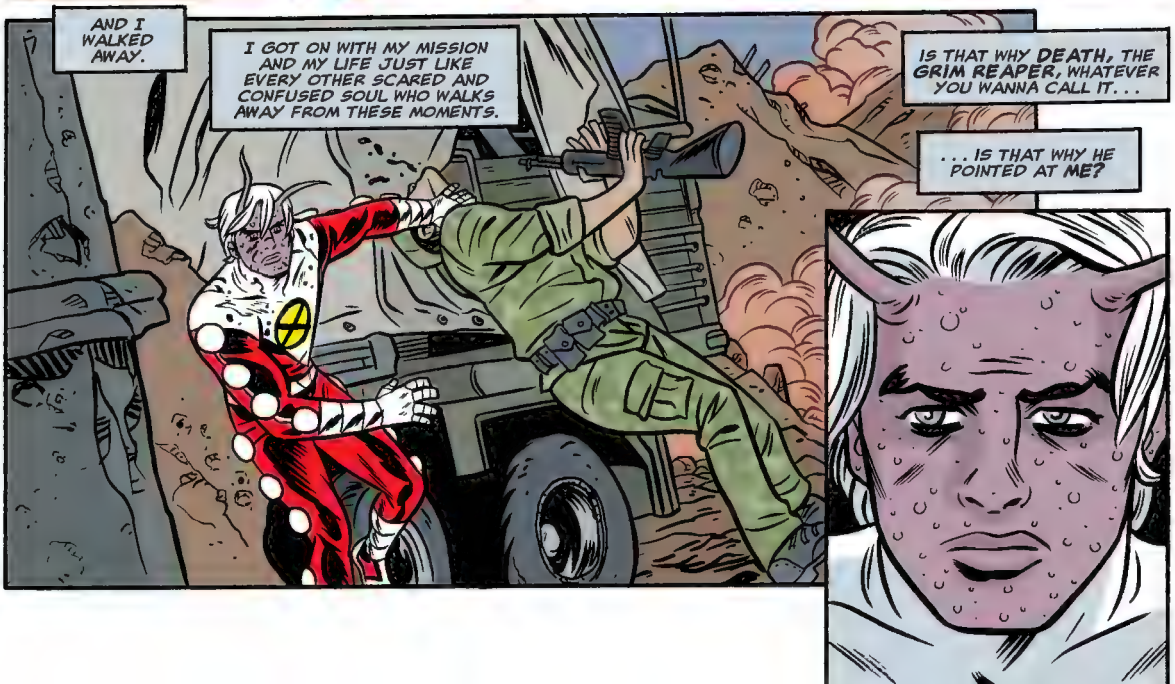
RIGHT. THOSE MULTINATIONALS WANT BLOOD. YOUR BLOOD, GUY. THEY WANT TO DESTROY YOU. AND BY EXTENSION, X-FORCE.
COME ON, EDIE! HOW THEY GONNA DO THAT?

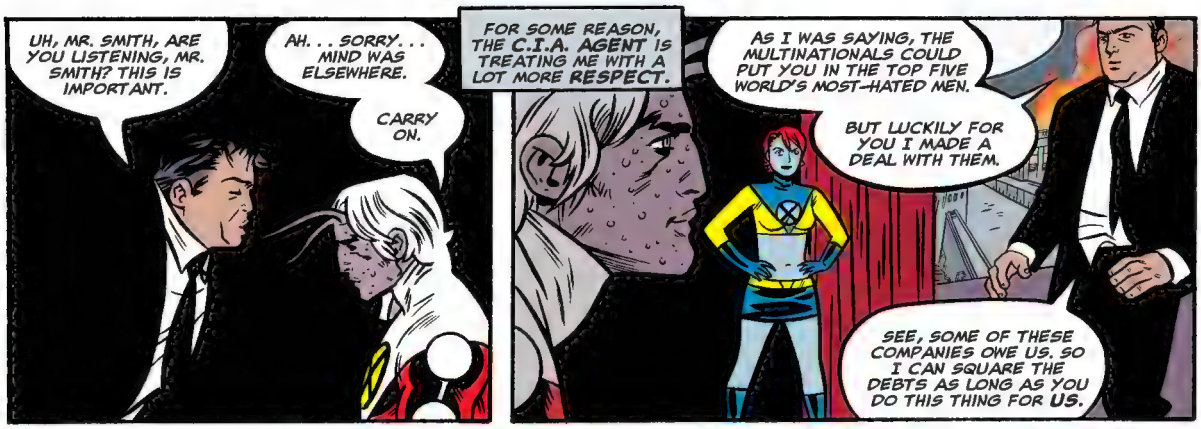
FOR STARTERS, THEY'RE GOING TO BEAM WORLDWIDE COMMERCIALS FEATURING KIDS WITH TERMINAL ILLNESSES, EXPLAINING HOW THEY'D HAVE A CHANCE TO LIVE IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOU.

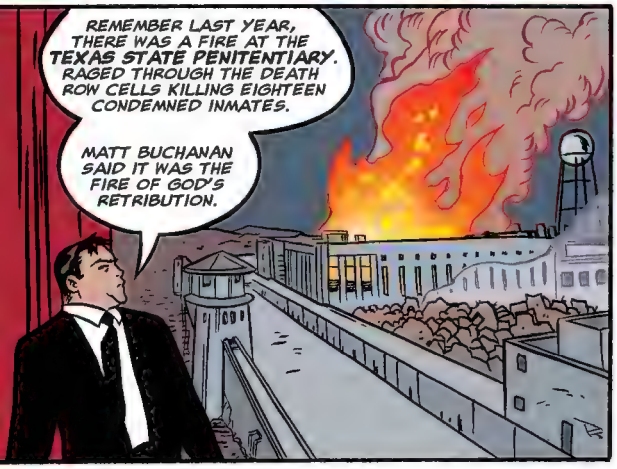
I SEE.
RIGHT.
I GUESS THAT WOULD DO IT.

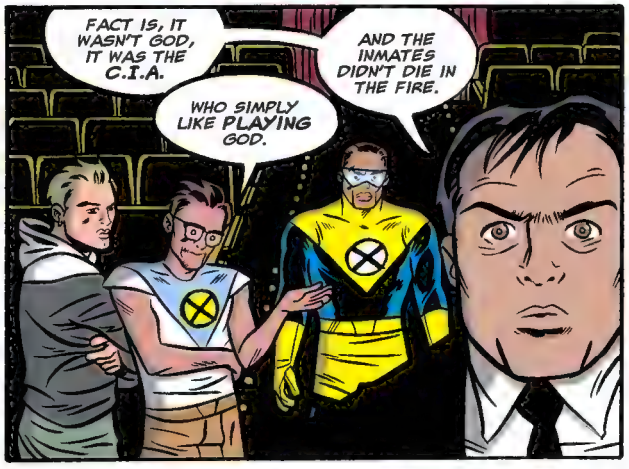

THERE WAS A MOMENT. NO.
THERE WAS AN OPPORTUNITY.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS.
BUT THERE WERE DEAD ADULTS, AND THERE WAS A YOUNG CHILD. A GIRL, I THINK.
THIS WAS BACK IN LATIN AMERICA, THE CLEAN SURGICAL STRIKE, YOU REMEMBER...


THE ROOM STUNK OF URINE AND FECES AND... ONIONS.
AND I LOOKED AT HER. I COULD HAVE PICKED HER UP. CARRIED HER AWAY. I HAD THE POWER.
LIFE OR DEATH FOR ALL I KNOW.


AND I WALKED AWAY.
I GOT ON WITH MY MISSION AND MY LIFE JUST LIKE EVERY OTHER SCARED AND CONFUSED SOUL WHO WALKS AWAY FROM THESE MOMENTS.
IS THAT WHY DEATH, THE GRIM REAPER, WHATEVER YOU WANNA CALL IT...
...IS THAT WHY HE POINTED AT ME?


UH, MR. SMITH, ARE YOU LISTENING, MR. SMITH? THIS IS IMPORTANT.
AH. . . SORRY. . . MIND WAS ELSEWHERE.
CARRY ON.
FOR SOME REASON, THE C.I.A. AGENT IS TREATING ME WITH A LOT MORE RESPECT.
AS I WAS SAYING, THE MULTINATIONALS COULD PUT YOU IN THE TOP FIVE WORLD'S MOST-HATED MEN.
BUT LUCKILY FOR YOU I MADE A DEAL WITH THEM.
SEE, SOME OF THESE COMPANIES OWE US. SO I CAN SQUARE THE DEBTS AS LONG AS YOU DO THIS THING FOR US.


REMEMBER LAST YEAR, THERE WAS A FIRE AT THE TEXAS STATE PENITENTIARY. RAGED THROUGH THE DEATH ROW CELLS KILLING EIGHTEEN CONDEMNED INMATES.
MATT BUCHANAN SAID IT WAS THE FIRE OF GOD'S RETRIBUTION.

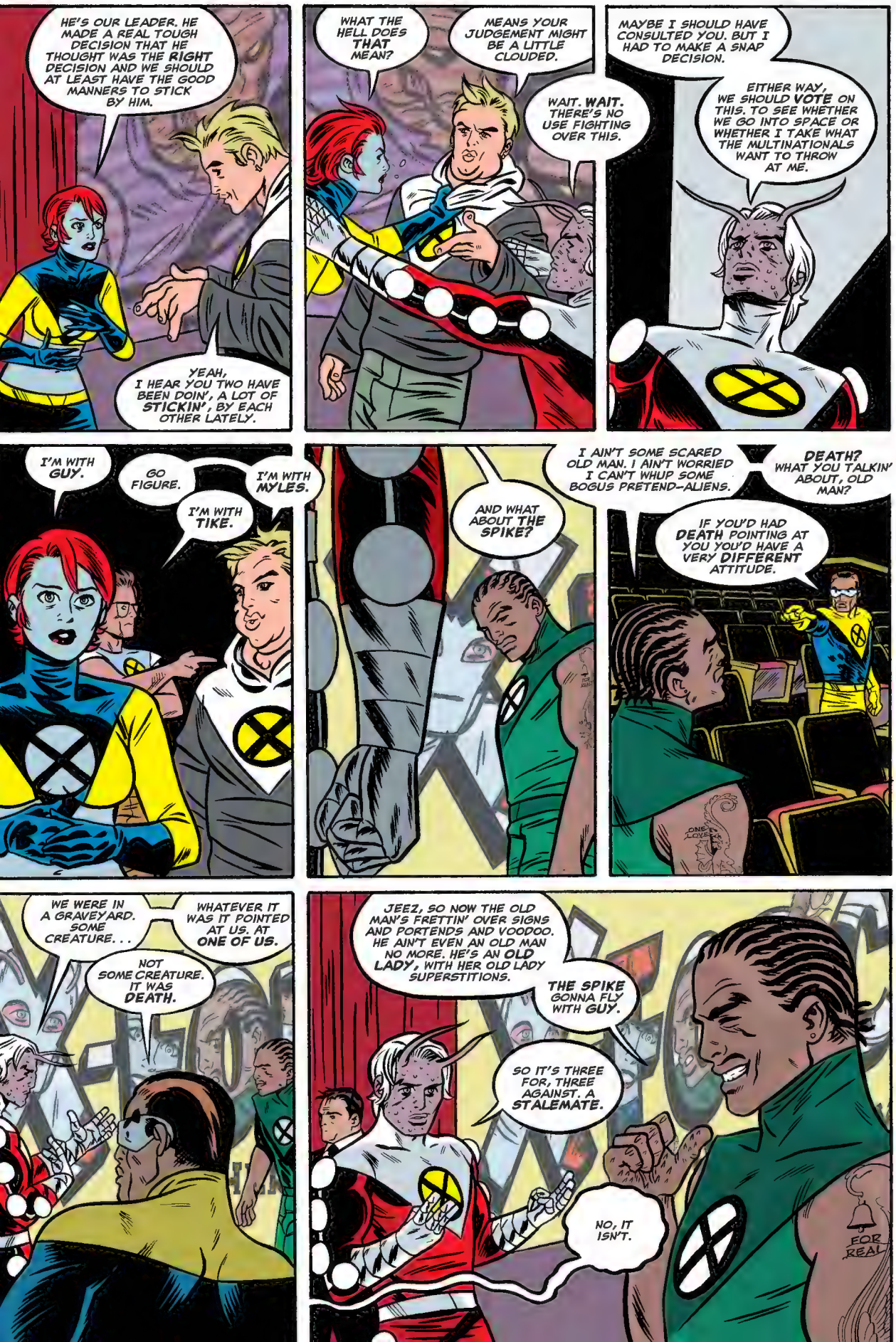

FACT IS, IT WASN'T GOD, IT WAS THE C.I.A.
AND THE INMATES DIDN'T DIE IN THE FIRE.
WHO SIMPLY LIKE PLAYING GOD.

THEY'D ALL AGREED TO SIGN UP FOR A SECRET AND EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURE.
THE IDEA WAS TO MANUFACTURE OUR OWN MUTANTS, WHOM WE COULD CONTROL.

MOST OF THEM ARE BROTHERS. YOU PICKED BROTHERS TO DO YOUR EXPERIMENTING ON.
THEY WERE ON DEATH ROW. WHAT'D YOU EXPECT? A HARDENED GANG OF HARVARD-EDUCATED WASPS?
HE'S RIGHT. WE JUST TOOK WHAT WAS THERE.

SO YOU GATHER TOGETHER A BUNCH OF CIVIC-MINDED MURDERERS AND RAPISTS EAGER TO SERVE SOCIETY. WHOSE SWELL IDEA WAS THAT?
I'LL GIVE YOU A CLUE.
THE CREATURES BECAME KNOWN AS BUSH RANGERS.

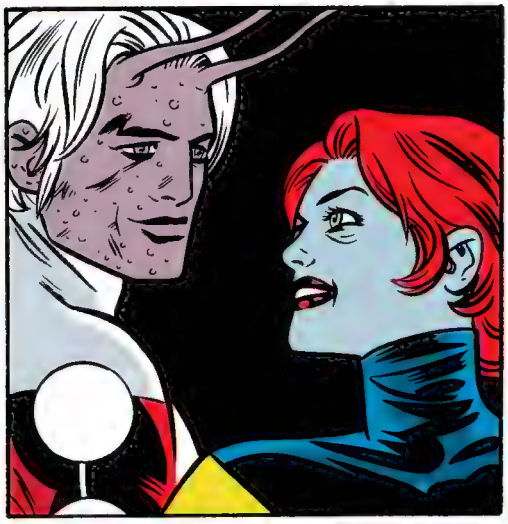
"OUR TOP SCIENTISTS SET ABOUT ALTERING THE STRUCTURE OF THEIR BODIES. OF COURSE, SOME DIED, AND SOME HAD TO BE EXTERMINATED BUT WE ENDED UP WITH THIRTEEN BUSH RANGERS."
"THEY WERE GOING TO BE A RAPID DEPLOYMENT CRACK DIVISION.
"PROBLEM IS, THE MUTATIONS ON THEIR BODIES WERE MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN THE WORK ON THEIR BRAINS TO TURN THEM INTO COMPLIANT, OBEDIENT SOLDIERS.
"THEY'VE TAKEN OVER THE MARS 2010 SPACE STATION, WHERE THEY WERE BEING TRAINED."
SO FAR WE'VE MANAGED TO KEEP A NEWS BLACKOUT.
BUT THE SPIN WE'RE GOING TO PUT ON IT IS THAT THEY'RE ALIENS. LESS EMBARRASSING FOR EVERYONE.
SO WHERE DO X-FORCE COME IN?
YOU GO UP THERE TO FIGHT THE, UH, ALIENS. YOU FREE THE HOSTAGES. THEN YOU GET INTO TROUBLE. YOU LET THE MONSTERS TAKE YOU AS HOSTAGES.
AND THE AGENCY RIDES IN ON OUR WHITE CHARGERS. WE SAVE THE DAY. OUR TARNISHED REPUTATION IS RESTORED.
THIS STINKS. IT'S GONNA BE LIKE THE BOYS R US MASSACRE ALL OVER.
YOU AIN'T GETTING ME ANYWHERE NEAR THAT FLIPPED-OUT SPACE STATION.
YOU HEARD THE MAN. IF WE DON'T DO THIS, THE MULTINATIONALS ARE GONNA HANG US OUT TO DRY!
UH-UH. WHAT THE MAN SAID WAS...
...THEY'D HANG GUY OUT TO DRY.
IT WAS GUY WHO LET PACO PEREZ GO. IT WAS GUY WHO DECIDED ONE KID'S LIFE WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANY DRUGS OR CURES OR WHATEVER THEY MIGHT HAVE GOT FROM HIM.
TIKE IS ABSOLUTELY RIGHT. GUY MADE A UNILATERAL DECISION NOT TO HAND PACO OVER. I DON'T RECALL BEING CONSULTED ON THE MATTER.
THE ORPHAN MADE THE CALL. LET HIM TAKE THE FALL.

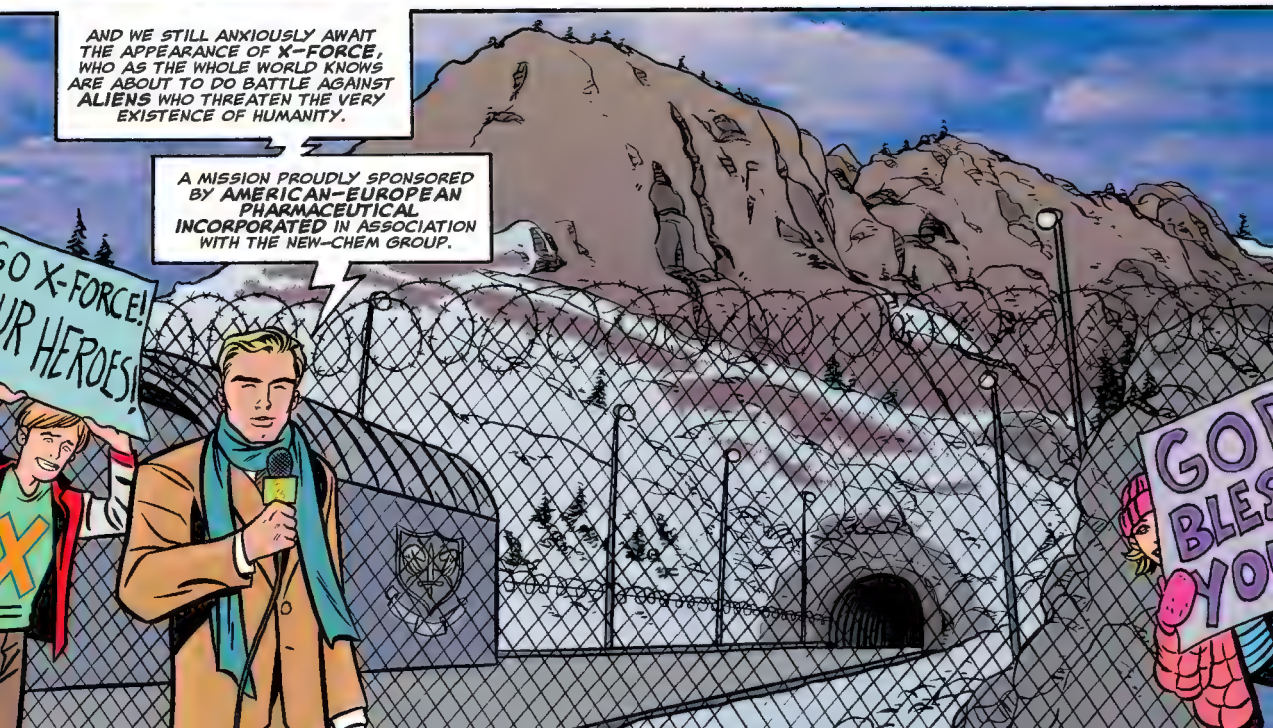

HE'S OUR LEADER. HE MADE A REAL TOUGH DECISION THAT HE THOUGHT WAS THE RIGHT DECISION AND WE SHOULD AT LEAST HAVE THE GOOD MANNERS TO STICK BY HIM.
YEAH, I HEAR YOU TWO HAVE BEEN DOIN', A LOT OF STICKIN', BY EACH OTHER LATELY.
WHAT THE HELL DOES THAT MEAN?
MEANS YOUR JUDGEMENT MIGHT BE A LITTLE CLOUDED.
WAIT. WAIT. THERE'S NO USE FIGHTING OVER THIS.
MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE CONSULTED YOU. BUT I HAD TO MAKE A SNAP DECISION.
EITHER WAY, WE SHOULD VOTE ON THIS. TO SEE WHETHER WE GO INTO SPACE OR WHETHER I TAKE WHAT THE MULTINATIONALS WANT TO THROW AT ME.
I'M WITH GUY.
GO FIGURE.
I'M WITH MYLES.
I'M WITH TIKE.
AND WHAT ABOUT THE SPIKE?
I AIN'T SOME SCARED OLD MAN. I AIN'T WORRIED I CAN'T WHUP SOME BOGUS PRETEND-ALIENS.
DEATH? WHAT YOU TALKIN' ABOUT, OLD MAN?
IF YOU'D HAD DEATH POINTING AT YOU YOU'D HAVE A VERY DIFFERENT ATTITUDE.
WE WERE IN A GRAVEYARD. SOME CREATURE...
WHATEVER IT WAS IT POINTED AT US. AT ONE OF US.
NOT SOME CREATURE. IT WAS DEATH.
JEEZ, SO NOW THE OLD MAN'S FRETTIN' OVER SIGNS AND PORTENDS AND VOODOO. HE AIN'T EVEN AN OLD MAN NO MORE. HE'S AN OLD LADY, WITH HER OLD LADY SUPERSTITIONS.
THE SPIKE GONNA FLY WITH GUY.
SO IT'S THREE FOR, THREE AGAINST. A STALEMATE.
NO, IT ISN'T.
FOR REAL

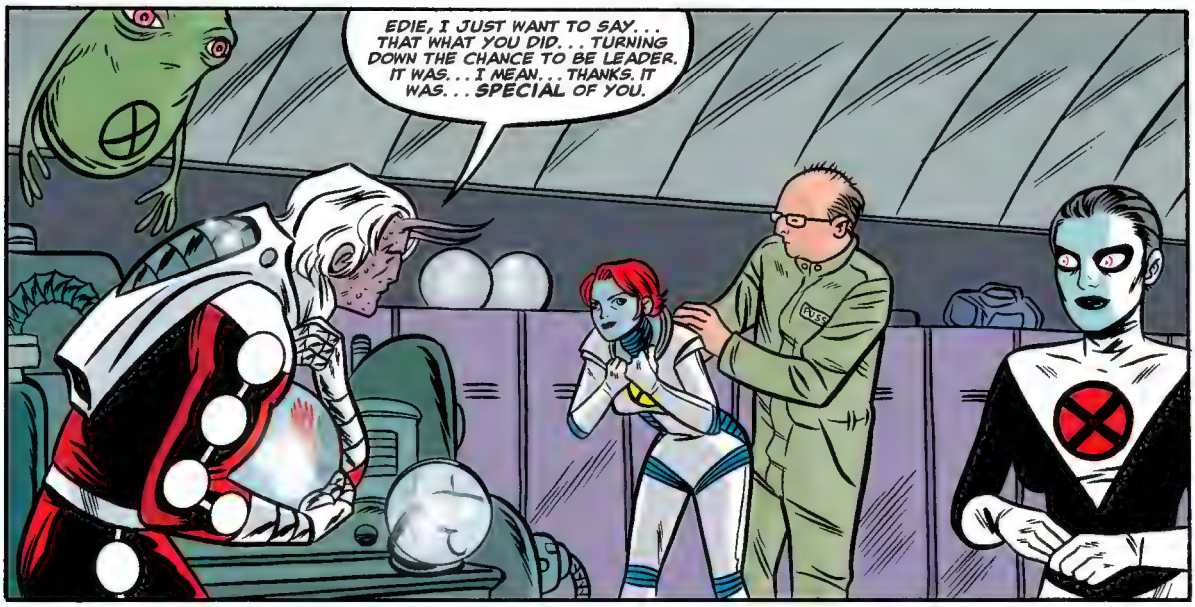
EXIT
I VOTE WITH GUY.
I'M DEAD GIRL, BY THE WAY.
SORRY I'M LATE.

DEMOCRACY WINS AGAIN!
JUST ONE MORE THING. THE AGENCY WOULD BE HAPPIER IF EDIE REPLACED YOU AS LEADER.
YOU DON'T HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THAT, DO YOU?

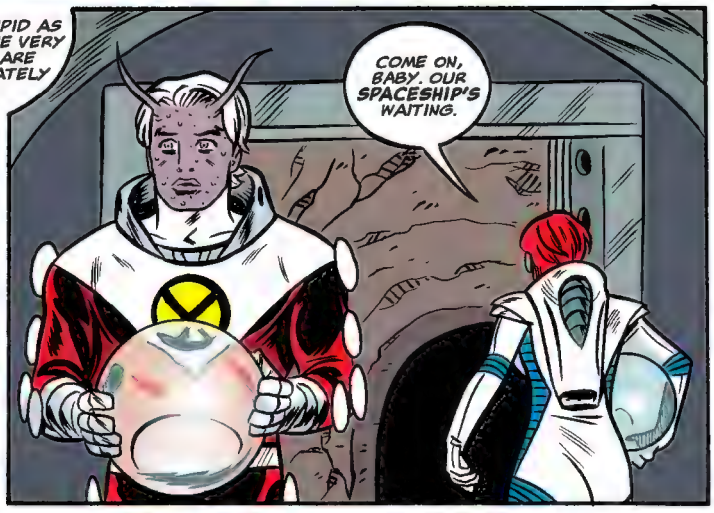
YES WE DO. WE HAVE ONE BIG PROBLEM. GUY IS OUR LEADER AND GUY'S GONNA STAY OUR LEADER.
BUT I THOUGHT YOU WANTED...
TO HELL WITH WHAT I WANTED. YOU GET US WITH GUY AS OUR NUMBER ONE OR YOU DON'T GET US AT ALL.

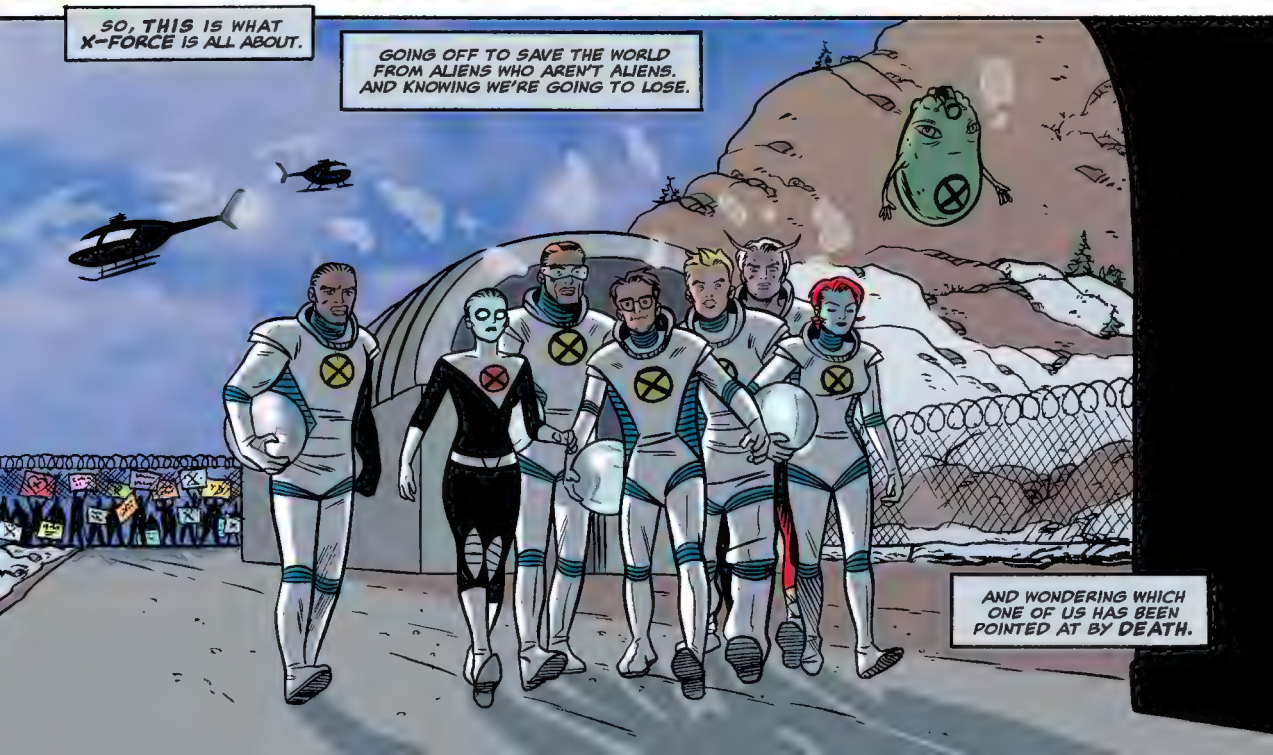



AND WE STILL ANXIOUSLY AWAIT THE APPEARANCE OF X-FORCE, WHO AS THE WHOLE WORLD KNOWS ARE ABOUT TO DO BATTLE AGAINST ALIENS WHO THREATEN THE VERY EXISTENCE OF HUMANITY.
A MISSION PROUDLY SPONSORED BY AMERICAN-EUROPEAN PHARMACEUTICAL INCORPORATED IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE NEW-CHEM GROUP.
GO X-FORCE! OUR HEROES!
GOD BLESS YOU


EDIE, I JUST WANT TO SAY... THAT WHAT YOU DID... TURNING DOWN THE CHANCE TO BE LEADER. IT WAS... I MEAN... THANKS. IT WAS... SPECIAL OF YOU.

SPECIAL SCHMECIAL. I LOVE YOU, BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN I DON'T AIM TO BE LEADER ONE DAY.
BUT I'M NOT SO STUPID AS TO TAKE OVER ON THE VERY MISSION THAT WE ARE GOING TO DELIBERATELY SCREW UP.


COME ON, BABY. OUR SPACESHIP'S WAITING.

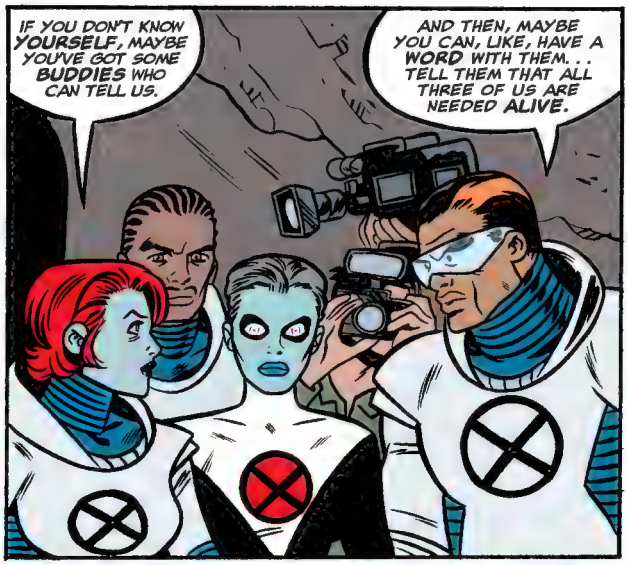

SO, THIS IS WHAT X-FORCE IS ALL ABOUT.
GOING OFF TO SAVE THE WORLD FROM ALIENS WHO AREN'T ALIENS. AND KNOWING WE'RE GOING TO LOSE.
AND WONDERING WHICH ONE OF US HAS BEEN POINTED AT BY DEATH.

GUESS WE'LL FIND OUT SOON ENOUGH.

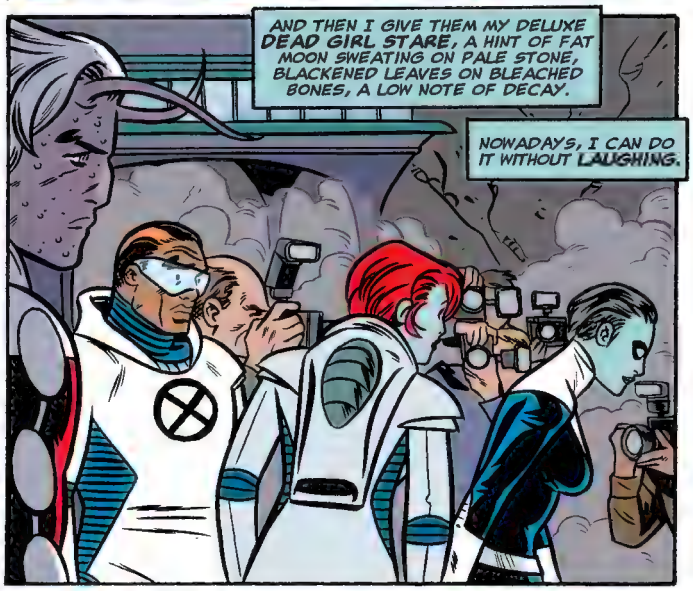
X-FORCE #126

AS I DIE LYING
PETER MILLIGAN-WRITER
MIKE ALLRED-ARTIST
LAURA ALLRED-COLORIST
DOC ALLRED & BLAMBOT-LETTERING
JOHN MIESEGAES-ASST. EDITOR
AXEL ALONSO-EDITOR
JOE QUESADA-CHIEF
BILL JEMAS-PRES.
SAY, DEAD GIRL, YOU'RE, LIKE, IN TOUCH WITH THE DEAD AND "THE OTHER SIDE" AND ALL THAT. MAYBE YOU CAN TELL US. . .
WHICH ONE OF US THREE IS GONNA COME BACK IN A BODY BAG?
GUY, ANY IDEA WHAT THE X-FORCE'S NEW NAME IS GONNA BE?
GIVE US ANY CLUES?
HAVE YOU SEEN THE BOOKIES' LATEST FAVES?
PRESS

WORD IS, SOME HIGH-ROLLERS FROM MALAYSIA ARE THROWING SERIOUS DOUGH ON YOU BEING X-SQUAD.
FIRST WE'LL SAVE THE PLANET. THEN WE'LL WORRY ABOUT WHAT WE'RE CALLED.


IF YOU DON'T KNOW YOURSELF, MAYBE YOU'VE GOT SOME BUDDIES WHO CAN TELL US.
AND THEN, MAYBE YOU CAN, LIKE, HAVE A WORD WITH THEM... TELL THEM THAT ALL THREE OF US ARE NEEDED ALIVE.

THE DARK FORCES OF THE OTHER SIDE ARE NOT TO BE TAMPERED WITH LIGHTLY.
THERE ARE DANGEROUS AND TERRIBLE REPERCUSSIONS FOR THOSE WHO MEDDLE WITH WHAT THEY DO NOT KNOW.


AND THEN I GIVE THEM MY DELUXE DEAD GIRL STARE, A HINT OF FAT MOON SWEATING ON PALE STONE, BLACKENED LEAVES ON BLEACHED BONES, A LOW NOTE OF DECAY.
NOWADAYS, I CAN DO IT WITHOUT LAUGHING.

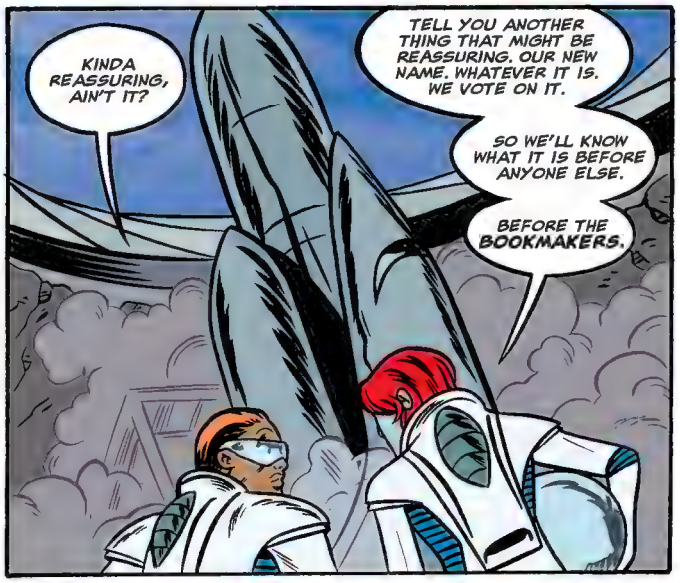
SO... YOU CAN... MAKE CONTACT?
I'M CALLED DEAD GIRL, AREN'T I, TIKE ALICAR?

THERE'S SOMEONE OVER THERE I'D LIKE TO... UH... SPEAK TO... OR AT LEAST... MAKE SURE HE'S ALL RIGHT.
HE'S NAMED... ZEITGEIST... I MEAN... AXEL.
AXEL CLUNEY.

CONTACTING THE DEAD ISN'T LIKE TEXTIN' A BUDDY, EDIE SAWYER.

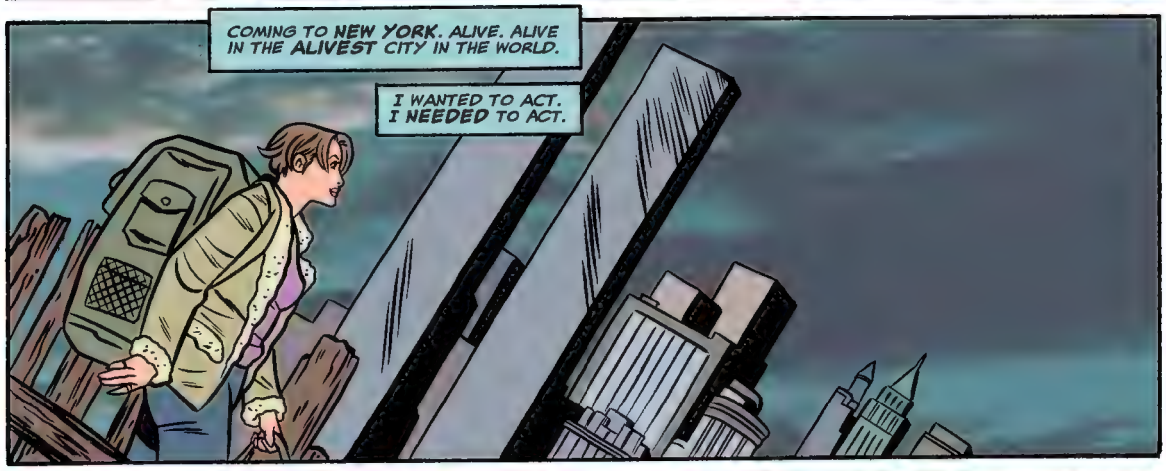
CAN WE STOP TALKING ABOUT DEATH AND DYING AND GET THIS RIDICULOUS MISSION OVER WITH?
LATER, EDIE.
BUT, GUY...

OKAY, SHE'S PLAYING IT COOL BUT I THINK WE CAN WORK ON HER.
HAVE YOU NOTICED HOW SHE CALLS US BY OUR FULL NAMES. EDIE SAWYER. TIKE ALICAR.
ONCE SHE REALLY FEELS PART OF THE TEAM SHE'LL WANT TO HELP US.


KINDA REASSURING, AIN'T IT?
TELL YOU ANOTHER THING THAT MIGHT BE REASSURING. OUR NEW NAME. WHATEVER IT IS. WE VOTE ON IT.
SO WE'LL KNOW WHAT IT IS BEFORE ANYONE ELSE.
BEFORE THE BOOKMAKERS.

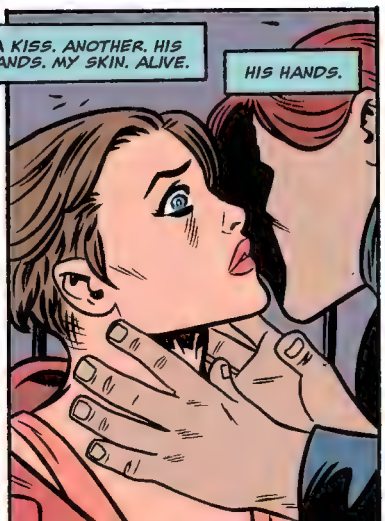
ISN'T THAT, LIKE, INSIDER TRADING?
YEP. BUT DON'T TELL GUY.
YOU GOT IT.
EDIE SAWYER.

I REMEMBER WHEN I WASN'T DEAD. WHEN I WAS WARM. WHEN I BLED, ATE, BREATHED, LIVED.
LOVED.
I REMEMBER.

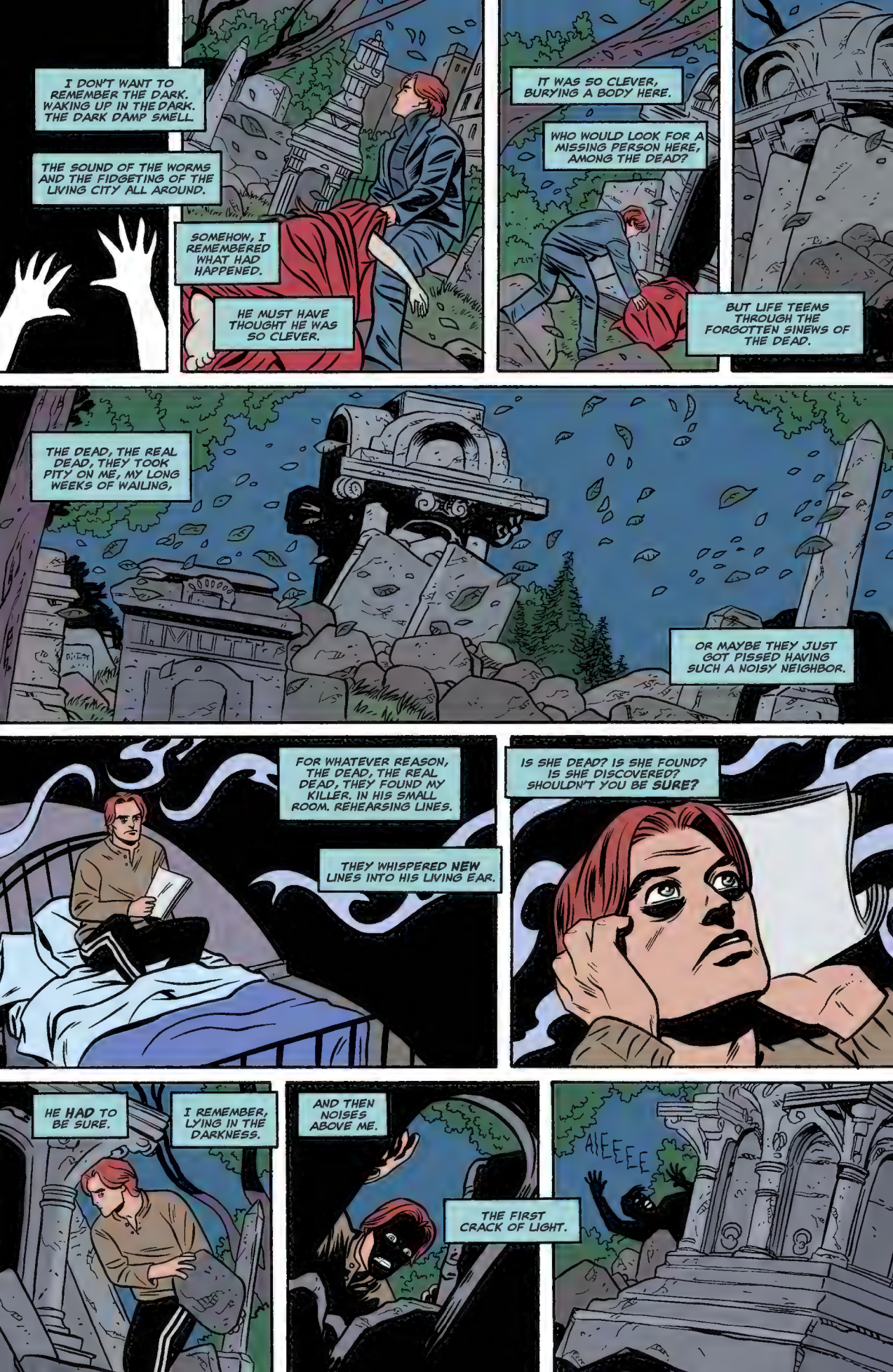

COMING TO NEW YORK. ALIVE. ALIVE IN THE ALIVEST CITY IN THE WORLD.
I WANTED TO ACT. I NEEDED TO ACT.

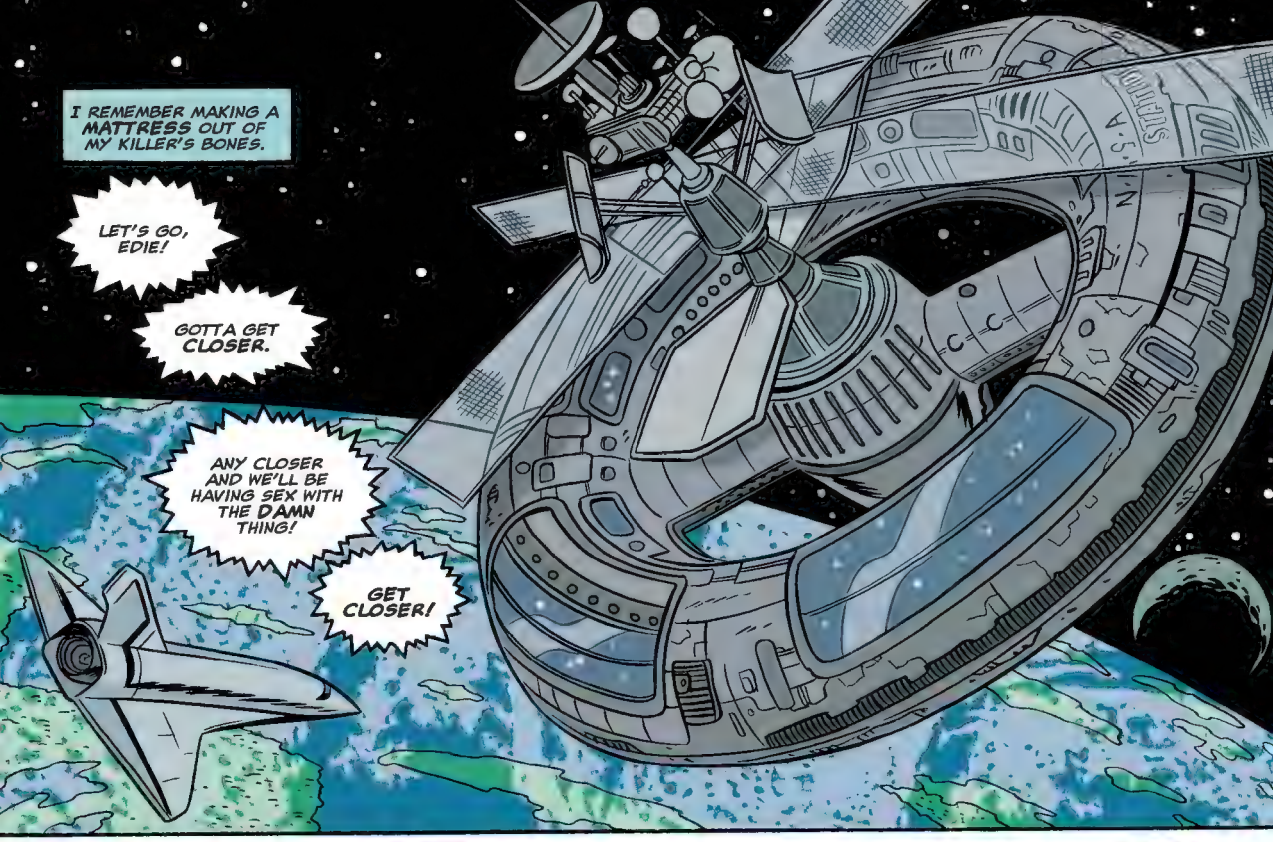
I WANTED A STAGE, NOT A CAMERA.
HOW DID IT HAPPEN, THE END?
YES. THAT'S IT. I REMEMBER.

A BOY. A MAN. AN ACTOR. A LIAR. A KILLER.
A SMALL ROOM IN A SMALL HOTEL IN A BIG CITY.


A KISS. ANOTHER. HIS HANDS. MY SKIN. ALIVE.
HIS HANDS.

I DON'T WANT TO REMEMBER.


I DON'T WANT TO REMEMBER THE DARK. WAKING UP IN THE DARK. THE DARK DAMP SMELL.
THE SOUND OF THE WORMS AND THE FIDGETING OF THE LIVING CITY ALL AROUND.
SOMEHOW, I REMEMBERED WHAT HAD HAPPENED.
HE MUST HAVE THOUGHT HE WAS SO CLEVER.
IT WAS SO CLEVER, BURYING A BODY HERE.
WHO WOULD LOOK FOR A MISSING PERSON HERE, AMONG THE DEAD?
BUT LIFE TEEMS THROUGH THE FORGOTTEN SINEWS OF THE DEAD.
THE DEAD, THE REAL DEAD, THEY TOOK PITY ON ME, MY LONG WEEKS OF WAILING,
OR MAYBE THEY JUST GOT PISSED HAVING SUCH A NOISY NEIGHBOR.
FOR WHATEVER REASON, THE DEAD, THE REAL DEAD, THEY FOUND MY KILLER. IN HIS SMALL ROOM. REHEARSING LINES.
THEY WHISPERED NEW LINES INTO HIS LIVING EAR.
IS SHE DEAD? IS SHE FOUND? IS SHE DISCOVERED? SHOULDN'T YOU BE SURE?
HE HAD TO BE SURE.
I REMEMBER, LYING IN THE DARKNESS.
AND THEN NOISES ABOVE ME.
THE FIRST CRACK OF LIGHT.
AIEEEE


I REMEMBER MAKING A MATTRESS OUT OF MY KILLER'S BONES.
LET'S GO, EDIE!
GOTTA GET CLOSER.
ANY CLOSER AND WE'LL BE HAVING SEX WITH THE DAMN THING!
GET CLOSER!

THIS IS SPACE. YOU REMEMBER, THE FINAL FRONTIER? IT SCREWS UP MY COORDINATES. AND THERE'S NO ROOM FOR THE SLIGHTEST ERROR. I DON'T WANT TO BE 'PORTING US MORE THAN A FEW YARDS.
OTHERWISE WE COULD ALL END UP IN A VERY COLD, DARK PLACE.

ISN'T THAT RIGHT, DEAD GIRL?
YOU KNOW IT, EDIE SAWYER.

FRAGHH!
FUD

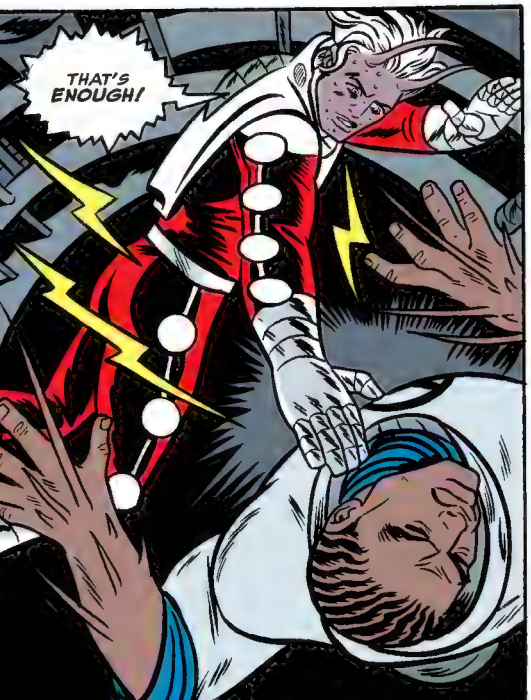
WOULD YOU BE KIND ENOUGH TO EXPLAIN YOUR ACTIONS? BEFORE I DO SOME VERY POSTMODERN THINGS TO YOUR VITAL ORGANS, THAT IS.
HAD ENOUGH OF YOU TWO SIMPERIN' AT EACH OTHER LIKE A COUPLE OF LOVE-SICK BEE-ATCHES!
WHAT'S GOIN' DOWN?

ANOTHER TIME! WE'RE ALMOST THERE!
TO HELL WITH ANOTHER TIME! IT'S TIME I KNEW WHO THE HELL I'M SUPPOSED TO BE FIGHTIN' WITH!

OKAY. WE WERE GOING TO WAIT TO TELL YOU ABOUT THIS...
WE'VE GOT NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED OF, BILLY-BOB.
MYLES, MAYBE THIS ISN'T SUCH A GOOD IDEA.

IT'S TRUE. BILLY-BOB AND I... WE HAVE... FEELINGS FOR EACH OTHER. SPECIAL FEELINGS. NEITHER OF US REALLY KNOW... EXACTLY WHAT THESE FEELINGS MIGHT ULTIMATELY MEAN.

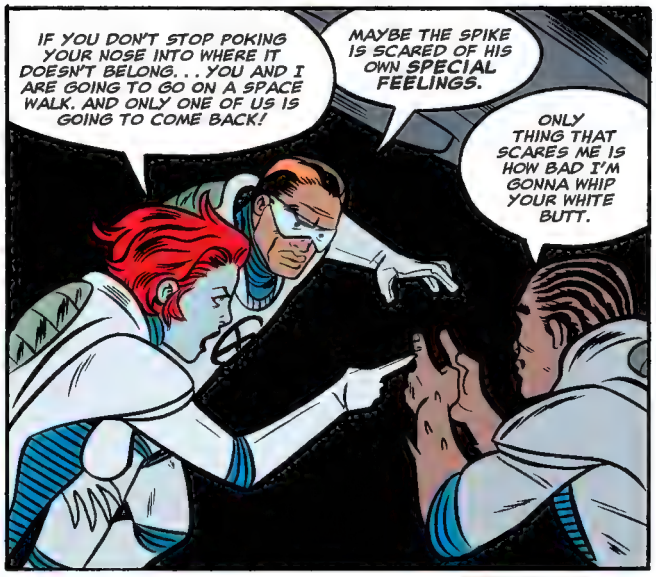
I KNOW WHAT THEY MEAN. THEY MEAN YOU'RE A COUPLE OF—

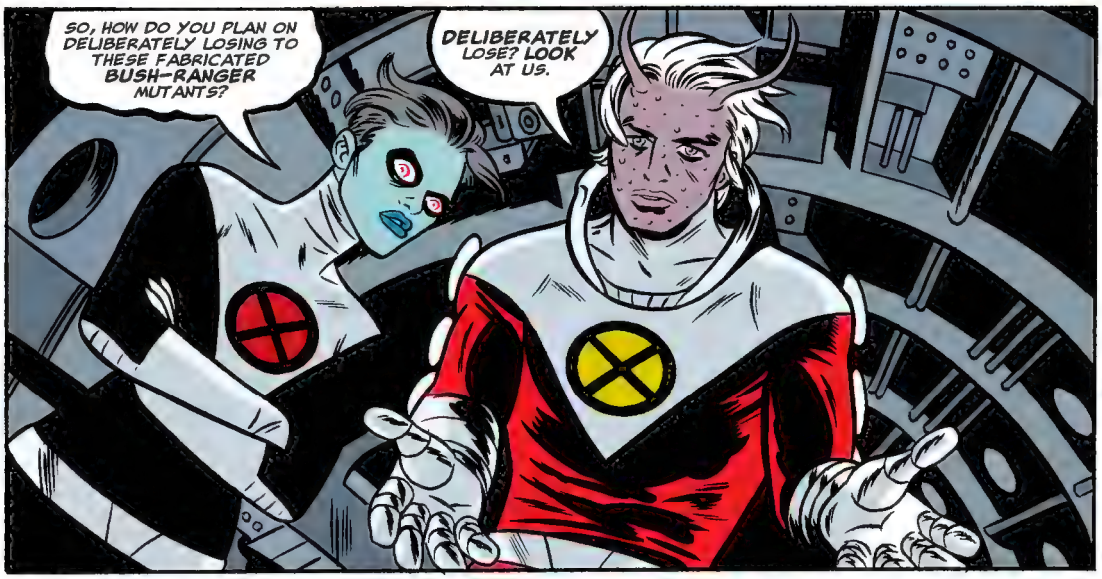

THAT'S ENOUGH!

WHEN YOU BOYS HAVE STOPPED PLAYING AROUND, WE'RE READY TO 'PORT.
HOPE YOU'RE ALL WEARING YOUR THERMAL UNDERWEAR. IT MIGHT GET PRETTY COLD OUT THERE.

ALL THAT MATTERS IS THEY'RE X-FORCE! WE'RE THE SAME TEAM.
YEAH? WE GET INTO A SCRAPE... WHO THEY GONNA LOOK OUT FOR... THE TEAM?
OR THEIR SPECIAL FEELINGS?

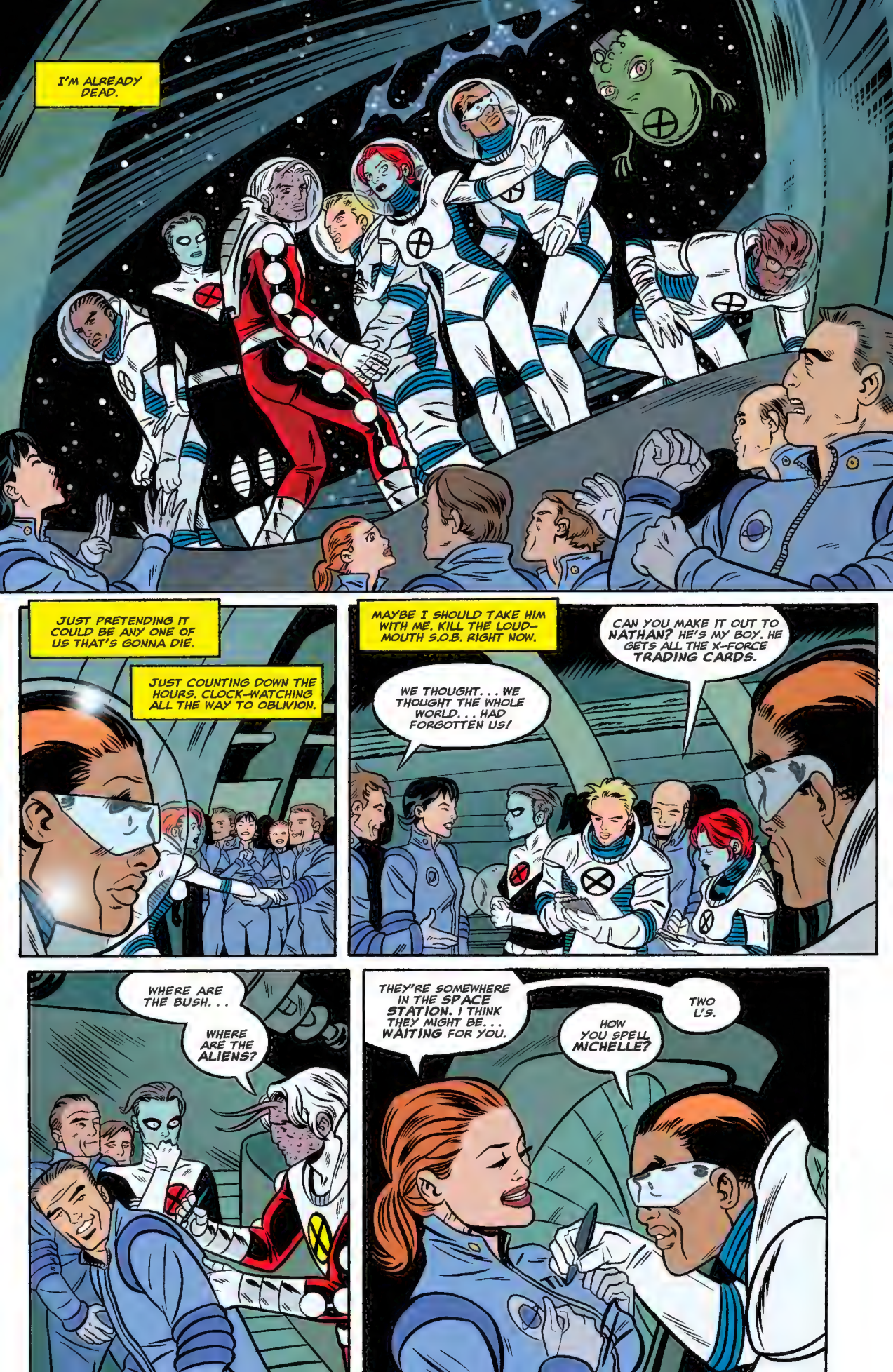
WHAT ABOUT GUY AND EDIE? WE ALL KNOW THEY'RE AN ITEM. NO ONE WONDERS IF THAT'S GONNA AFFECT WHO THEY'RE LOYAL TO.
WELL MAYBE SOMEONE SHOULD.


IF YOU DON'T STOP POKING YOUR NOSE INTO WHERE IT DOESN'T BELONG. . . YOU AND I ARE GOING TO GO ON A SPACE WALK. AND ONLY ONE OF US IS GOING TO COME BACK!
MAYBE THE SPIKE IS SCARED OF HIS OWN SPECIAL FEELINGS.
ONLY THING THAT SCARES ME IS HOW BAD I'M GONNA WHIP YOUR WHITE BUTT.

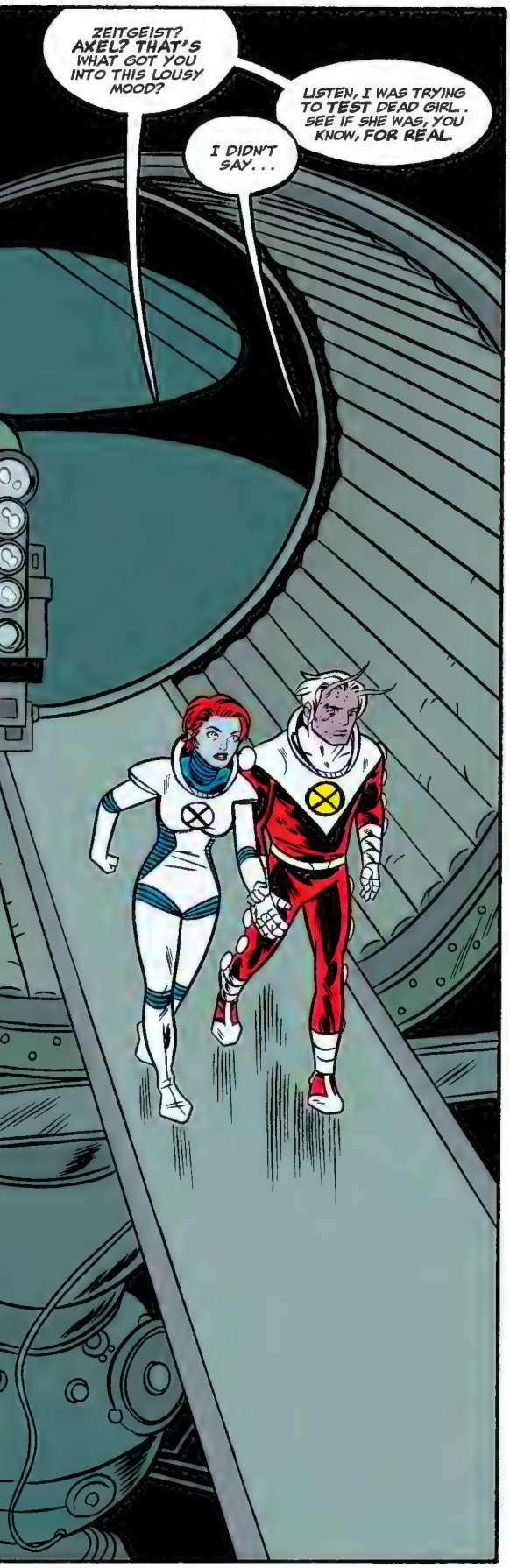

SO, HOW DO YOU PLAN ON DELIBERATELY LOSING TO THESE FABRICATED BUSH-RANGER MUTANTS?
DELIBERATELY LOSE? LOOK AT US.

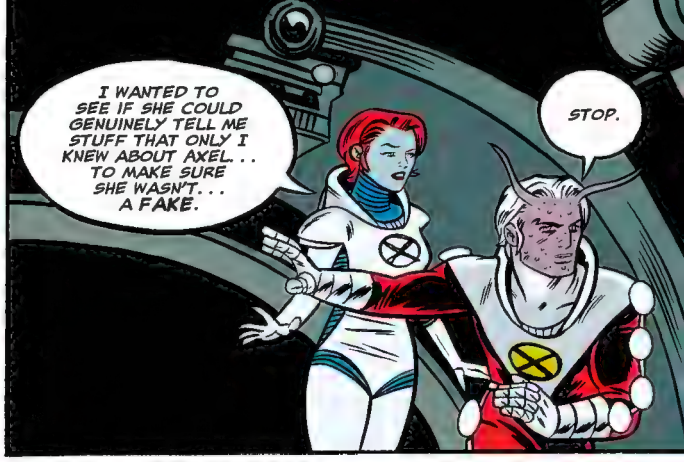
WE'RE PROBABLY GOING TO LOSE WHETHER WE WANT TO OR NOT!

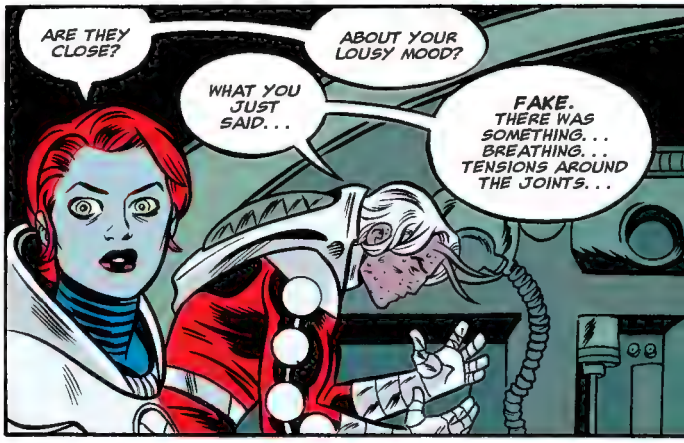
YOU CAN SMILE IN THAT MYSTICAL, KNOWING WAY. BUT IT'S ALL RIGHT FOR YOU.
YOU'RE ALREADY DEAD.

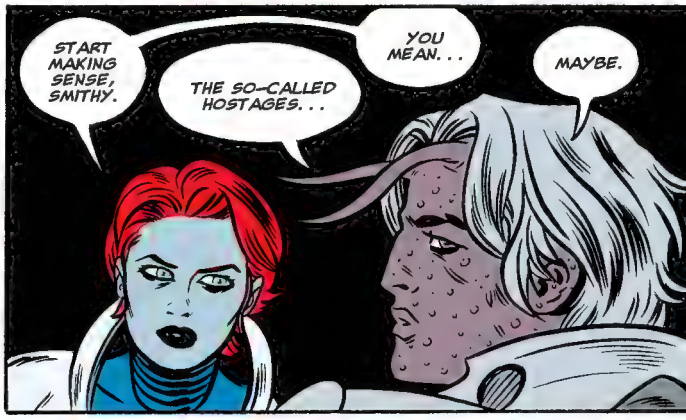

I'M ALREADY DEAD.
JUST PRETENDING IT COULD BE ANY ONE OF US THAT'S GONNA DIE.
JUST COUNTING DOWN THE HOURS. CLOCK-WATCHING ALL THE WAY TO OBLIVION.
MAYBE I SHOULD TAKE HIM WITH ME. KILL THE LOUD-MOUTH S.O.B. RIGHT NOW.
CAN YOU MAKE IT OUT TO NATHAN? HE'S MY BOY. HE GETS ALL THE X-FORCE TRADING CARDS.
WE THOUGHT... WE THOUGHT THE WHOLE WORLD... HAD FORGOTTEN US!
WHERE ARE THE BUSH...
WHERE ARE THE ALIENS?
THEY'RE SOMEWHERE IN THE SPACE STATION. I THINK THEY MIGHT BE... WAITING FOR YOU.
HOW YOU SPELL MICHELLE?
TWO L'S.

GOOD LUCK, X-FORCE!
OUR HEROES!
GOD BLESS YOU!


ZEITGEIST? AXEL? THAT'S WHAT GOT YOU INTO THIS LOUSY MOOD?
LISTEN, I WAS TRYING TO TEST DEAD GIRL. SEE IF SHE WAS, YOU KNOW, FOR REAL.
I DIDN'T SAY...


I WANTED TO SEE IF SHE COULD GENUINELY TELL ME STUFF THAT ONLY I KNEW ABOUT AXEL... TO MAKE SURE SHE WASN'T... A FAKE.
STOP.


ARE THEY CLOSE?
ABOUT YOUR LOUSY MOOD?
WHAT YOU JUST SAID...
FAKE. THERE WAS SOMETHING... BREATHING... TENSIONS AROUND THE JOINTS...


START MAKING SENSE, SMITHY.
THE SO-CALLED HOSTAGES...
YOU MEAN...
MAYBE.

THAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH MUTANTS. YOU NEVER KNOW WHERE YOU ARE WITH THEM.
YOU SAID IT.

SHOT IN THE BACK. SHOULD HAVE GUESSED.
ZBLAT
JEEZ!
UH!
YOU JUST LIE THERE, OLD MAN, AND LET THE YOUTH TAKE OVER.
FUDDA FUDDA
ARE YOU OKAY, TIKE ALICAR?
IS THAT WHAT THAT NOISE IS?
JUST A FEW SMASHED VERTEBRAE.
UUH-UH.

THAT'S MY DAMN TEETH GRINDING.

WAIT! HOLD UP! WE DIDN'T WANNA HURT YOU.
THEN WHAT WAS THAT SHOT IN THE BACK? A BROTHERLY HANDSHAKE?

THAT WAS BEFORE WE SAW WHO YOU WERE. WE SHOULDN'T BE FIGHTING EACH OTHER.
WE'RE ON THE SAME SIDE, MAN.

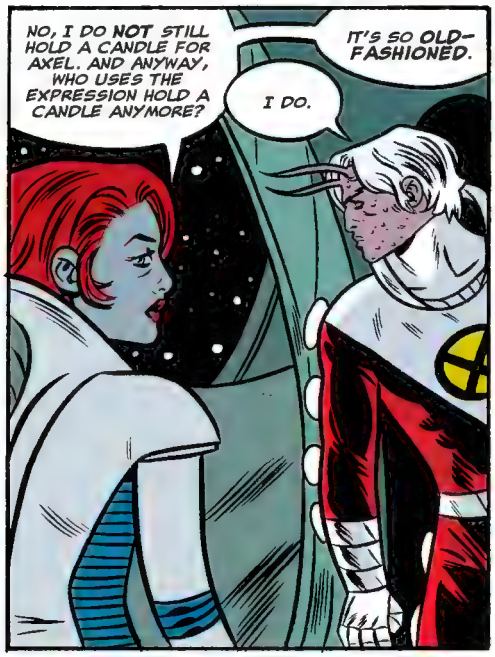
HE'S RIGHT. WE DIDN'T WANNA BE TURNED INTO MUTANTS. BUT IF WE DIDN'T GET WID THE PROGRAM WE WERE GONNA GET THE LETHAL INJECTION DOUBLE QUICK.
THAT AIN'T OUR PROBLEM. WE'RE X-FORCE.
YOU'RE BLACK.

COME ON, MAN. WE SAW YOU TWO GUYS ON THAT SHOW... WHEN YOU CALLED THE ANARCHIST HERE CAPTAIN COCONUT.
BLACK OUTSIDE. WHITE INSIDE.
SO HOW BLACK ARE YOU, MAN? WHO YOU REALLY LOYAL TO?

DON'T LISTEN, SPIKEY! THEY WERE ON DEATH ROW. THEY'RE KILLERS!
WE WERE TRIED AND CONVICTED BY A WHITE RACIST SYSTEM, MAN. YOU KNOW IT'S TRUE!

THEY'RE... RIGHT.

HELL YEAH, WE'RE RIGHT!
ZZZZZT
NO!
AAGGHH!
ALREADY DEAD.
BUT A LONG, SLOW, NASTY DEATH.
MAYBE THERE ARE NO OTHER KINDS.
RESPECT, MAN. DID THE RIGHT THING.



I GUESS SAVING A WOMAN'S LIFE IS OLD-FASHIONED TOO!

ZBLATT

UHH!

YOU CAN'T BE JEALOUS OF AXEL! HE'S DEAD!
THAT MAKES IT WORSE!
ZOW
HOW DO YOU WORK THAT OUT?

HOW CAN YOU COMPETE WITH A DEAD LOVER?

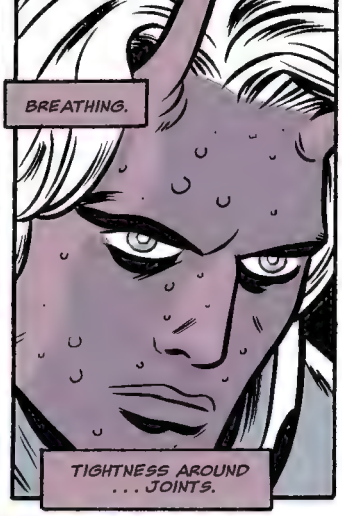
IT'S NOT ABOUT COMP-
EGNGNN!
ZAKK

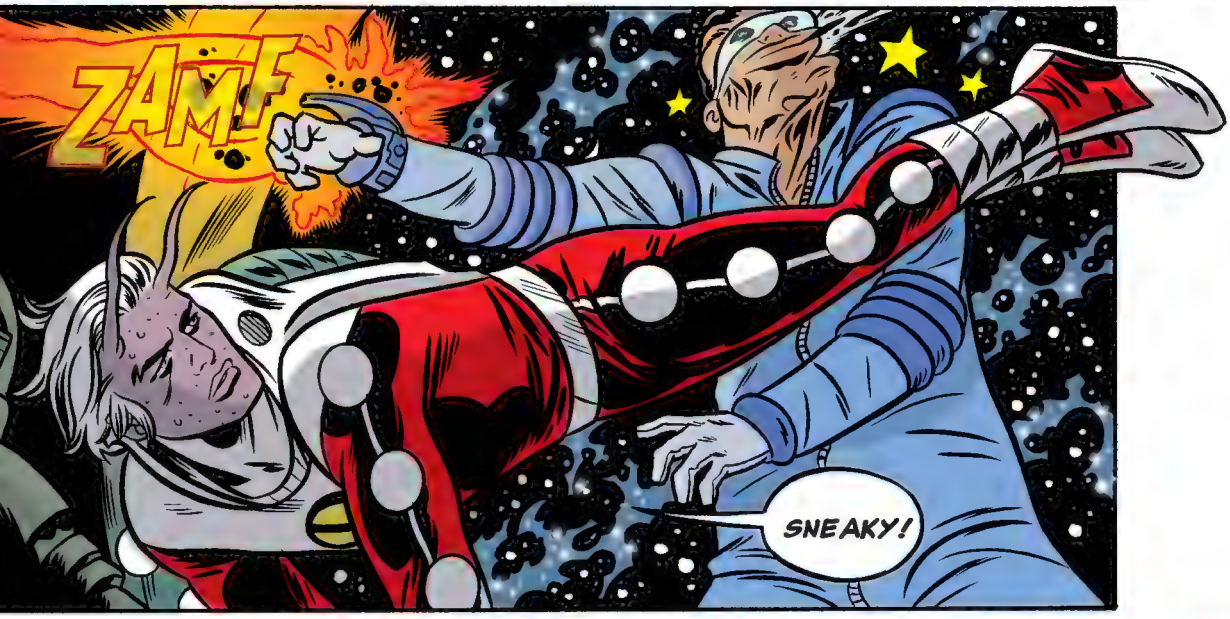
EDIE!

IS SHE HURT?
I DON'T KNOW! MAYBE!
SHE LOOKS PRETTY CUTE LIKE THAT. ALL LIMP AND VULNERABLE.

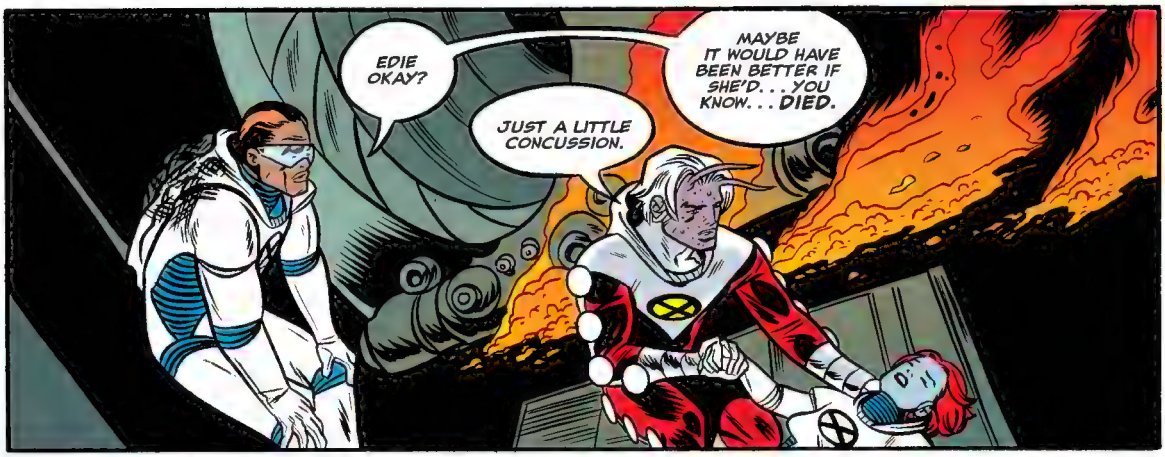
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? WATCH MY BACK WHILE I CHECK HER OVER.

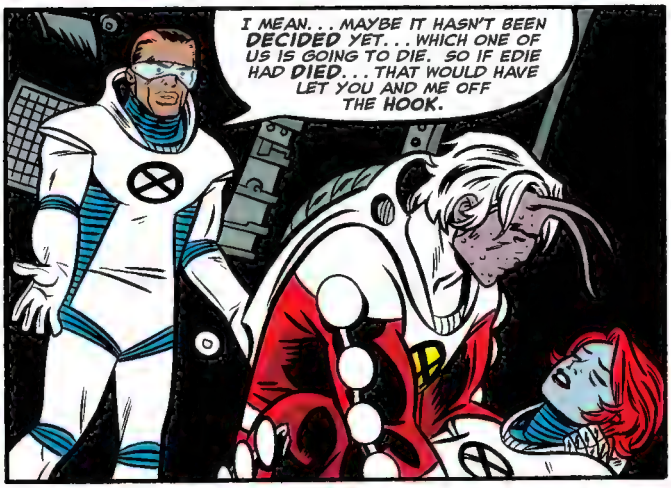
SURE, GUY. I'LL WATCH YOUR BACK.
KLIK


BREATHING.
TIGHTNESS AROUND . . . JOINTS.

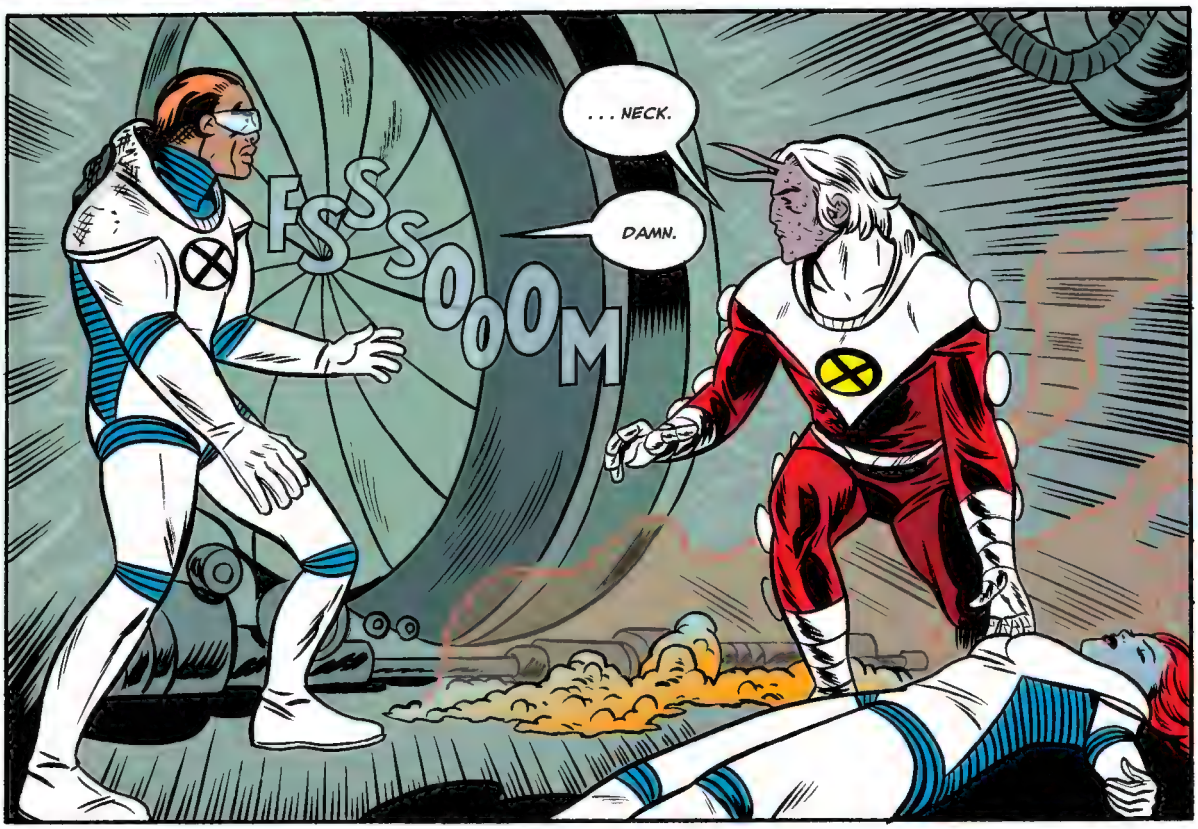

ZAM!
SNEAKY!

AND ILLEGAL. THE USE OF MY IMAGE IS PROTECTED UNDER THE COPYRIGHT LAW!
WHERE ARE THOSE SILVER-TONGUED LAWYERS WHEN YOU NEED THEM?
ZRAK


EDIE OKAY?
JUST A LITTLE CONCUSSION.
MAYBE IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER IF SHE'D... YOU KNOW... DIED.


I MEAN... MAYBE IT HASN'T BEEN DECIDED YET... WHICH ONE OF US IS GOING TO DIE. SO IF EDIE HAD DIED... THAT WOULD HAVE LET YOU AND ME OFF THE HOOK.

IF IT WAS A CHOICE BETWEEN ME AND HER... I'D RATHER I WAS THE ONE WHO DIED.
AND IF YOU TALK LIKE THAT AGAIN I'LL BREAK YOUR...


FSSSOOOM
... NECK.
DAMN.

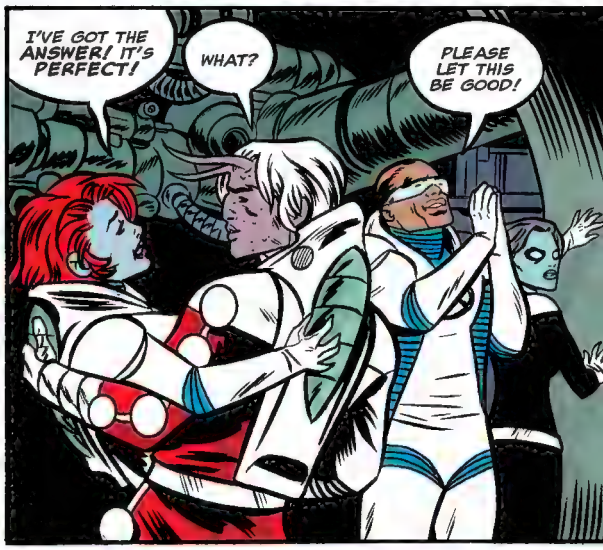
"THE OXYGEN'S RUNNING OUT, TIKE! HIT THE DOOR HARDER!"
"IF I HIT IT ANY HARDER WE'LL ALL FRY IN THE BACKDRAFT!"
L99
"MAYBE ONE OF THE OTHERS WILL COME LOOK FOR US. WHERE'S THE SPIKE?"
"LONG STORY."
"DEAD GIRL?"
"DEAD."
I KNOW THAT, I MEAN. . ."
L99
"AND I MEAN SHE'S DEAD. DEAD DEAD. BLOWN APART. SHE SAVED MY LIFE."
"SHE SAVED YOUR. . .?"
L99
"SHE SAVED MY LIFE.
"ONLY FOR US ALL TO DIE HERE."

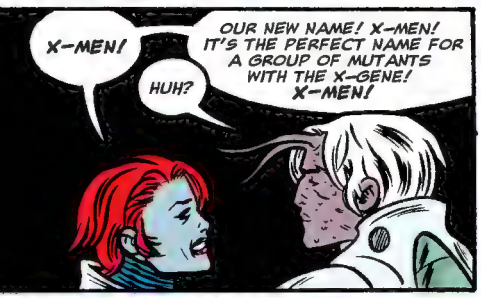
GUY, WHAT I SAID, ABOUT EDIE DYING. . . I'M SORRY, MAN. THINK I'M LOSING MY MIND.
I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL.
SAVED! BEFORE EITHER OF US COULD CONFIDE SOME DEEPLY EMBARRASSING PERSONAL SECRET.
FSHOOM
DEAD GIRL! YOU'RE ALIVE!
HAH HAH.
JUST HOW MANY TIMES YOU GONNA SAVE MY SORRY BUTT?

I DON'T KNOW. I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING. I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'RE GOING TO DIE. I'M NOT IN TOUCH WITH SPIRITS OR THE DEAD OR THE OTHER SIDE. IT'S ALL A LIE.
MY WHOLE DEATH IS A LIE!

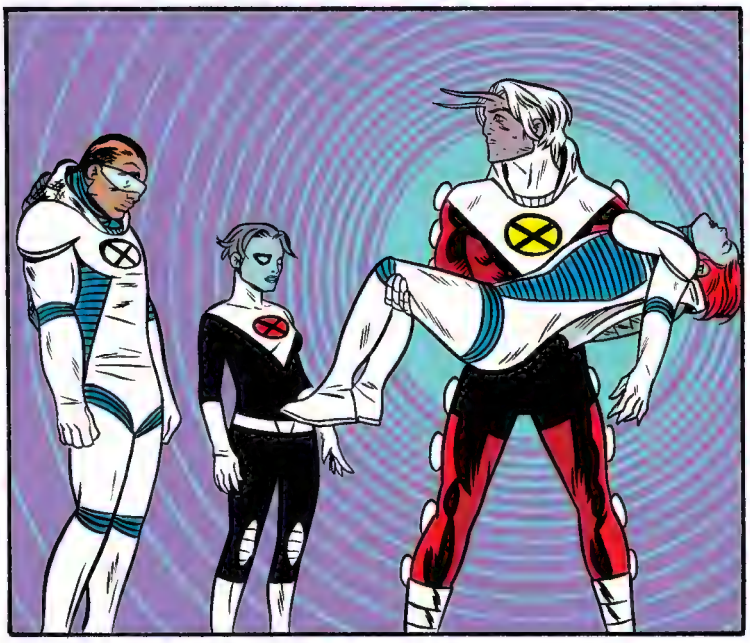
I'M NOT EVEN SURE IF I KNOW WHO I WAS WHEN I WAS ALIVE. WAS I AN ACTRESS? MAYBE THAT'S A LIE TOO. TO MAKE ME FEEL BETTER.
I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING. I'M JUST SCARED AND LONELY... AND SCARED. BECAUSE YOU'RE PROBABLY ALL GONNA DIE UP HERE AND LEAVE ME ALONE.

YOU'LL DIE AND YOUR CORPSES WILL BLOAT AND THEN EXPLODE AND DISINTEGRATE AND I'LL BE LEFT ALONE, FLOATING ALONE IN THE DARKNESS, FOR ALL TIME, IN THE DARKNESS.
THAT IS ONE COMFORTING THOUGHT.
I'VE GOT IT!


I'VE GOT THE ANSWER! IT'S PERFECT!
WHAT?
PLEASE LET THIS BE GOOD!


X-MEN!
HUH?
OUR NEW NAME! X-MEN! IT'S THE PERFECT NAME FOR A GROUP OF MUTANTS WITH THE X-GENE! X-MEN!

ZZZZZZ



X-FORCE #127

THEY'RE DEAD.

THE MUTANT FIGHTING TEAM KNOWN AS X-FORCE HAS BEEN KILLED BY ALIEN INVADERS.

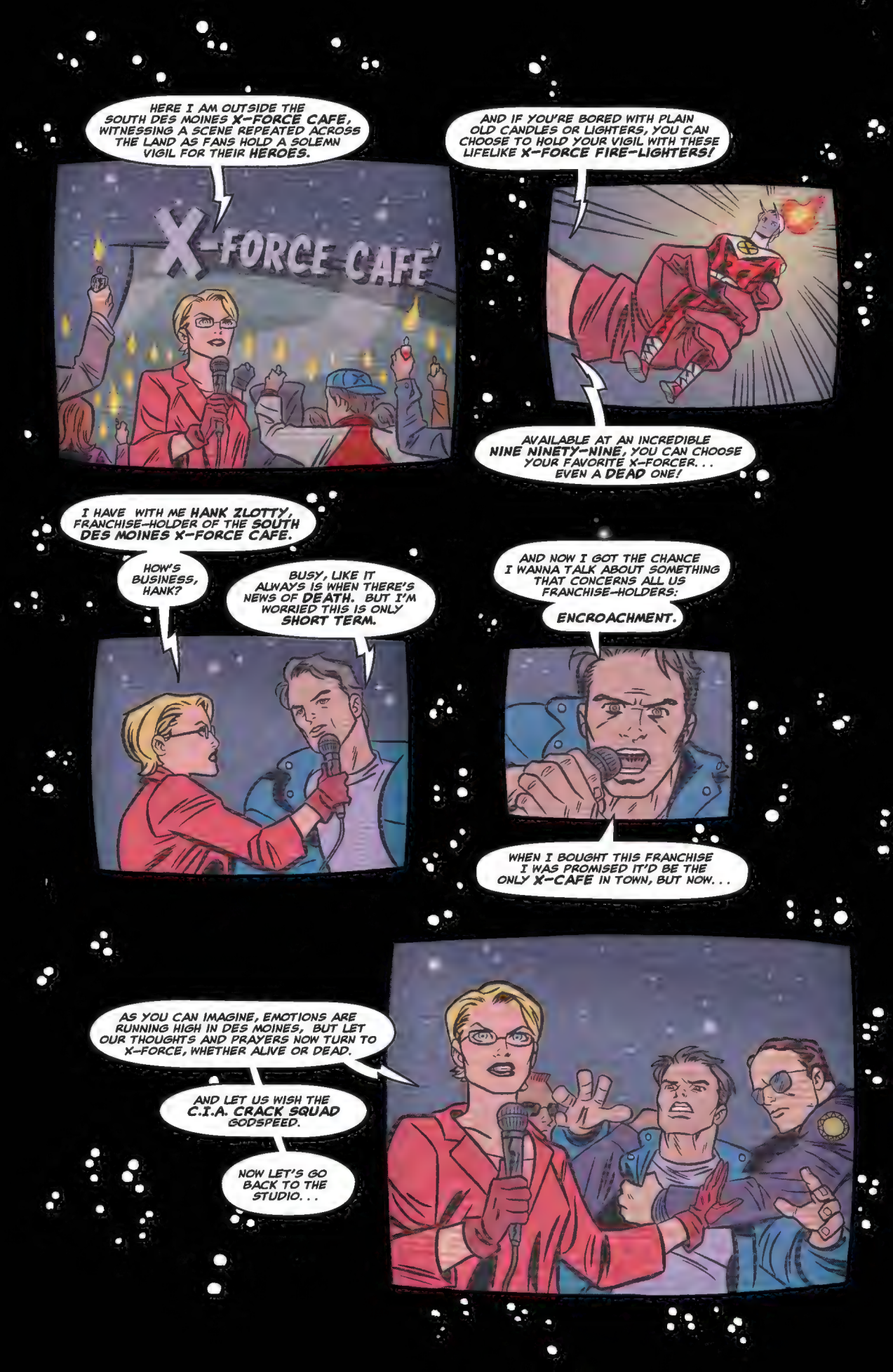
AT LEAST THAT'S THE WAY IT'S LOOKING.

ARTIST'S RENDITION

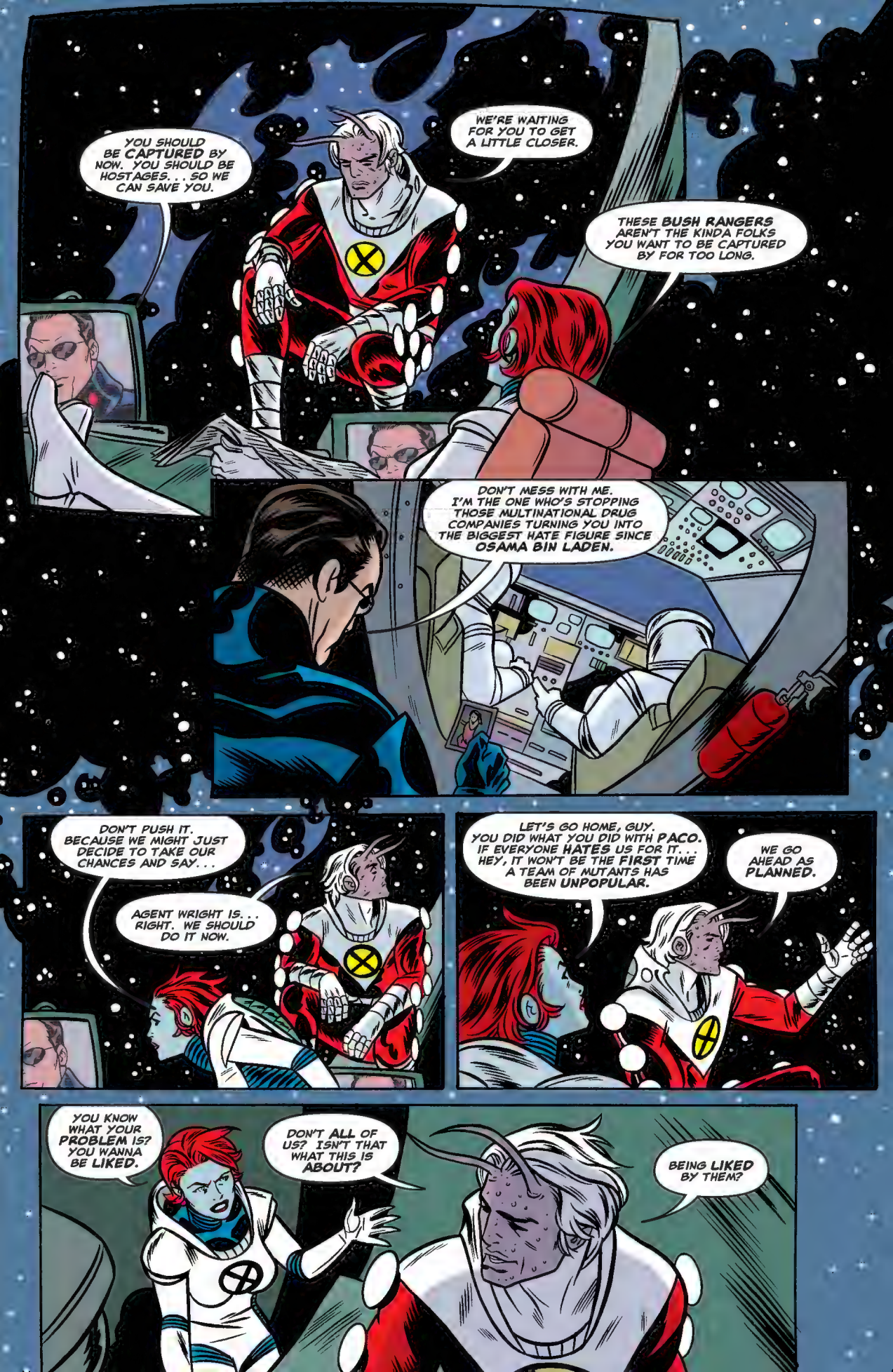
THIS IS AN ARTIST'S IMPRESSION OF HOW THINGS MIGHT BE ON THE MARS 2010 SPACE STATION.

BECAUSE THERE'S AN OUTSIDE CHANCE THAT THERE MIGHT BE SURVIVORS UP THERE, A C.I.A. CRACK SQUAD IS ON ITS WAY.

THOUGH IF I WERE YOU, I'D KEEP HOLD OF MY X-FORCE MERCHANDISE. . . BECAUSE ITS VALUE IS PROBABLY ABOUT TO GO THROUGH THE ROOF.


HERE I AM OUTSIDE THE SOUTH DES MOINES X-FORCE CAFE, WITNESSING A SCENE REPEATED ACROSS THE LAND AS FANS HOLD A SOLEMN VIGIL FOR THEIR HEROES.
X-FORCE CAFE
AND IF YOU'RE BORED WITH PLAIN OLD CANDLES OR LIGHTERS, YOU CAN CHOOSE TO HOLD YOUR VIGIL WITH THESE LIFELIKE X-FORCE FIRE-LIGHTERS!
AVAILABLE AT AN INCREDIBLE NINE NINETY-NINE, YOU CAN CHOOSE YOUR FAVORITE X-FORCER... EVEN A DEAD ONE!
I HAVE WITH ME HANK ZLOTTY, FRANCHISE-HOLDER OF THE SOUTH DES MOINES X-FORCE CAFE.
HOW'S BUSINESS, HANK?
BUSY, LIKE IT ALWAYS IS WHEN THERE'S NEWS OF DEATH. BUT I'M WORRIED THIS IS ONLY SHORT TERM.
AND NOW I GOT THE CHANCE I WANNA TALK ABOUT SOMETHING THAT CONCERNS ALL US FRANCHISE-HOLDERS:
ENCROACHMENT.
WHEN I BOUGHT THIS FRANCHISE I WAS PROMISED IT'D BE THE ONLY X-CAFE IN TOWN, BUT NOW...
AS YOU CAN IMAGINE, EMOTIONS ARE RUNNING HIGH IN DES MOINES, BUT LET OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS NOW TURN TO X-FORCE, WHETHER ALIVE OR DEAD.
AND LET US WISH THE C.I.A. CRACK SQUAD GODSPEED.
NOW LET'S GO BACK TO THE STUDIO...

"AND THE WEATHER."
SMITH. . . CAN YOU HEAR ME?
LOUD AND CLEAR.
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING? ARE YOU MUTANTS ON VACATION?
JUST SQUEEZING A LITTLE R AND R IN-BETWEEN THE RELENTLESS BLOODSHED AND DRAMA.
YOU LIKE THE SMELL OF ROTTING VEGETATION, DEADGIRL?
BECAUSE LOUISE
PETER MILLIGAN-WRITER MICHAEL ALLRED-ARTIST LAURA ALLRED-COLORIST
DOC ALLRED & BLAMBOT-LETTERING JOHN MIESGAES-ASST. EDITOR
AXEL ALONSO-EDITOR JOE QUESADA-CHIEF BILL JEMAS-PRESIDENT


YOU SHOULD BE CAPTURED BY NOW. YOU SHOULD BE HOSTAGES. . . SO WE CAN SAVE YOU.
WE'RE WAITING FOR YOU TO GET A LITTLE CLOSER.
THESE BUSH RANGERS AREN'T THE KINDA FOLKS YOU WANT TO BE CAPTURED BY FOR TOO LONG.
DON'T MESS WITH ME. I'M THE ONE WHO'S STOPPING THOSE MULTINATIONAL DRUG COMPANIES TURNING YOU INTO THE BIGGEST HATE FIGURE SINCE OSAMA BIN LADEN.
DON'T PUSH IT. BECAUSE WE MIGHT JUST DECIDE TO TAKE OUR CHANCES AND SAY. . .
AGENT WRIGHT IS. . . RIGHT. WE SHOULD DO IT NOW.
LET'S GO HOME, GUY. YOU DID WHAT YOU DID WITH PACO. IF EVERYONE HATES US FOR IT. . . HEY, IT WON'T BE THE FIRST TIME A TEAM OF MUTANTS HAS BEEN UNPOPULAR.
WE GO AHEAD AS PLANNED.
YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR PROBLEM IS? YOU WANNA BE LIKED.
DON'T ALL OF US? ISN'T THAT WHAT THIS IS ABOUT?
BEING LIKED BY THEM?

LIKE THAT?
NO?
SO GIVE IT UP!

I COULD PUT A SPIKE THROUGH YOUR SKULL RIGHT NOW.
G'HEAD. . . LONG AS YOU DON'T MIND MY HOMIES TEARIN' YOUR ORGANS OUT THE MINUTE YOU DO.

SAVE US ALL A LOT OF LAUNDRY BILLS.
SAY, WHY YOU DISSED X-FORCE AN' JOINED OUR DAMNED, CONDEMNED, AND OTHERWISE IRREDEEMABLY DOOMED POSSE?
I TOLD YOU. YOU'RE MY BROTHERS. I GOT MORE IN COMMON WITH YOU THAN THEM KNUCKLEHEADS.

ZIPPO, TAKE HIS KIDNEYS.
STANLEY, YOU CAN HAVE HIS GIBLETS.
WHERE DO I FIND HIS GIBLETS, TRAY?
USE YOUR INITIATIVE, BOY.

A' IGHT. . .
MAYBE THAT ISN'T THE ONLY REASON.

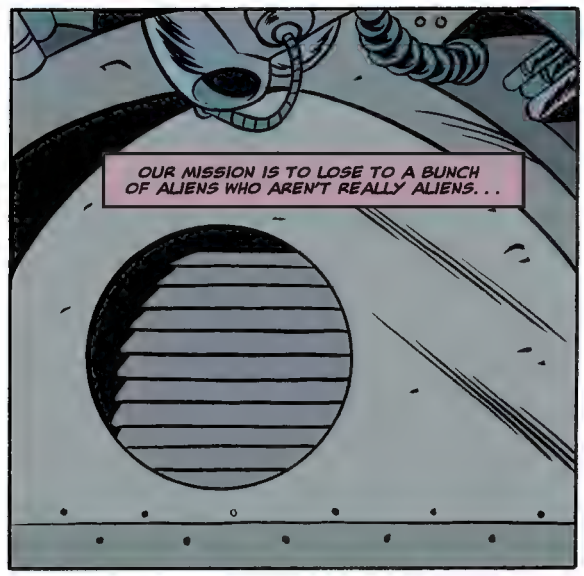
IT'S A SETUP. THE WHOLE IDEA IS THAT... X-FORCE WILL LET YOU TAKE THEM... SO THE C.I.A. CAN SAVE THEM. IT'S A PUBLICITY STUNT, NOTHING MORE.
ONLY LOSERS WILL BE YOU.

THERE MIGHT BE ANOTHER WAY. A WAY WHERE WE ALL WIN...
ALMOST ALL.
IF YOU ESCAPE. GET BACK TO EARTH. THE ONLY ONE THAT'S GONNA BE HURT IS GUY SMITH. HE'LL BE CRUCIFIED. FINISHED.

AND WITH THE ORPHAN OUT OF THE WAY... X-FORCE WILL BE NEEDING A NEW LEADER.
SOMEONE A LITTLE... DARKER?
THERE'S AN IDEA.

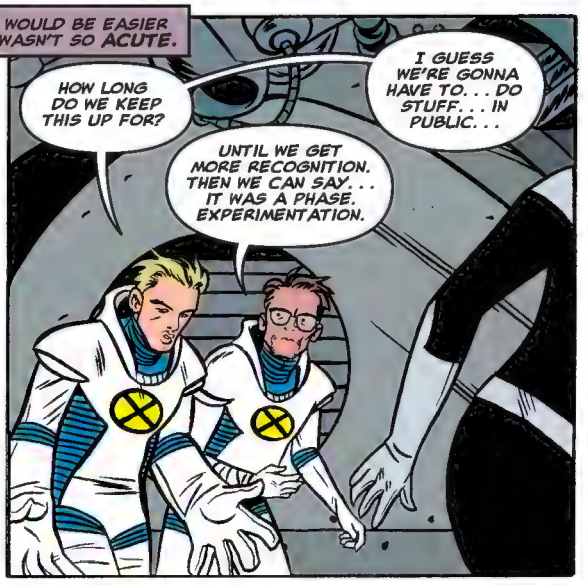
MAYBE BEFORE WE GO INTO BUSINESS TOGETHER, I SHOULD INFORM YOU OF THE CRIMES FOR WHICH THE STATE OF TEXAS WANTED ME EXECUTED.
C'MERE... SOME OF THESE BOYS ARE SURPRISINGLY SQUEAMISH.

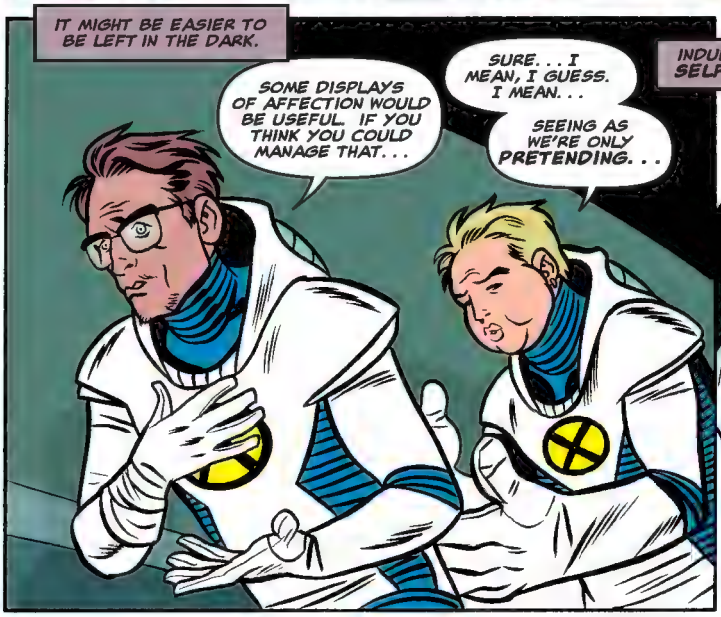
'SUP, BROTHER.
STILL WANNA HANG WID THE BAD BOYS?


OUR MISSION IS TO LOSE TO A BUNCH OF ALIENS WHO AREN'T REALLY ALIENS...

I DON'T WANT TO BE LIKED. ADORED FROM AFAR. ENVIED. BUT NOT LIKED.
AS ALWAYS, THERE ARE COMPLICATIONS.

SOMETIMES IT WOULD BE EASIER IF MY HEARING WASN'T SO ACUTE.
I EXPLAINED. I'M IN THE DARK, TOO. WHY ARE YOU SO INTERESTED IN DEATH?
IT'S... FORWARD PLANNING. Y' KNOW?

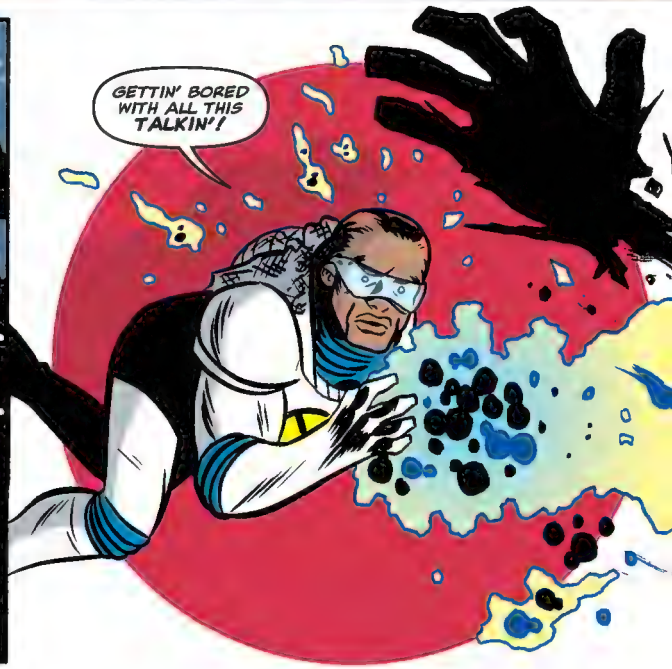

HOW LONG DO WE KEEP THIS UP FOR?
I GUESS WE'RE GONNA HAVE TO... DO STUFF... IN PUBLIC...
UNTIL WE GET MORE RECOGNITION. THEN WE CAN SAY... IT WAS A PHASE. EXPERIMENTATION.

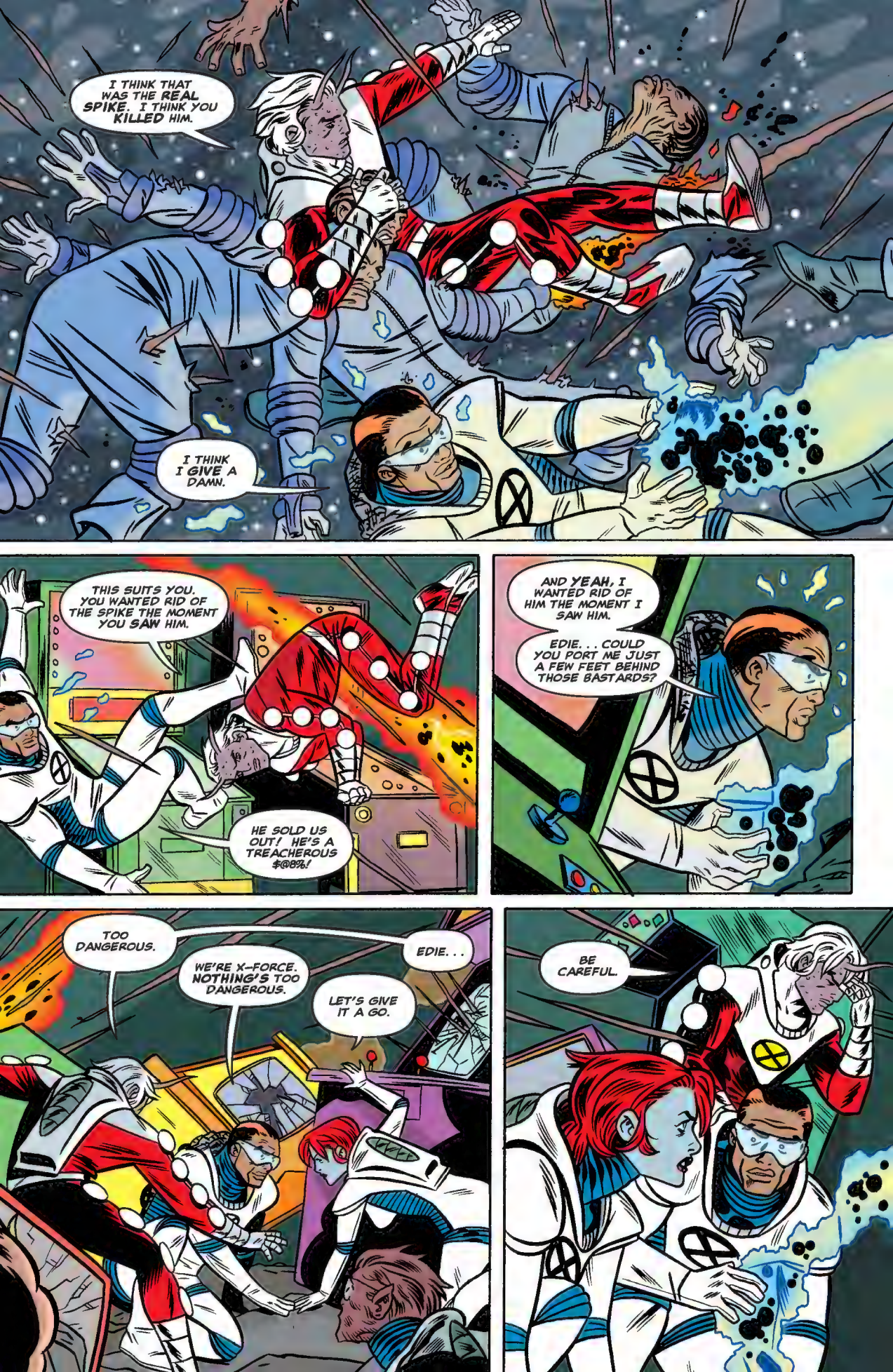

IT MIGHT BE EASIER TO BE LEFT IN THE DARK.
SOME DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION WOULD BE USEFUL. IF YOU THINK YOU COULD MANAGE THAT...
SURE... I MEAN, I GUESS. I MEAN...
SEEING AS WE'RE ONLY PRETENDING...

INDULGE IN A LITTLE SELF-DECEPTION.
WHAT?!

SPIKEY?
THAT'S ME.
NO, I'M THE SPIKE.
OUTTA HERE! I'M THE SPIKE.
HI SCORES

DON'T LISTEN TO THEM. THEY HAVE A REPLICATOR GENE AND I THINK IT MAKES THEM TOTALLY INSANE. I THOUGHT I COULD REASON WITH THEM, COME TO SOME KIND OF DEAL BUT...


GETTIN' BORED WITH ALL THIS TALKIN'!

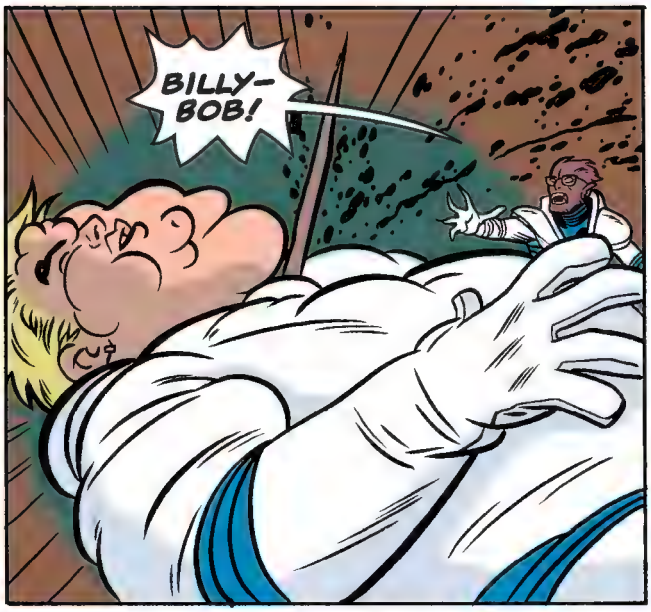

I THINK THAT WAS THE REAL SPIKE. I THINK YOU KILLED HIM.
I THINK I GIVE A DAMN.
THIS SUITS YOU. YOU WANTED RID OF THE SPIKE THE MOMENT YOU SAW HIM.
HE SOLD US OUT! HE'S A TREACHEROUS $@%!
AND YEAH, I WANTED RID OF HIM THE MOMENT I SAW HIM.
EDIE... COULD YOU PORT ME JUST A FEW FEET BEHIND THOSE BASTARDS?
TOO DANGEROUS.
WE'RE X-FORCE. NOTHING'S TOO DANGEROUS.
EDIE...
LET'S GIVE IT A GO.
BE CAREFUL.

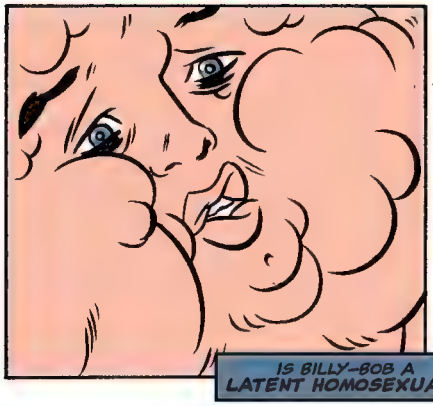
WHAT I MEAN IS... BE LUCKY.
I THINK..I THINK I KNOW WHAT TO DO NOW. A WAY OUT OF THE EXISTENTIALIST MAZE. MY LIFE WAS A MYSTERY. MY DEATH MAKES NO SENSE.
BUT MY LIFE AFTER DEATH AFTER LIFE MIGHT COME TO MEAN SOMETHING.

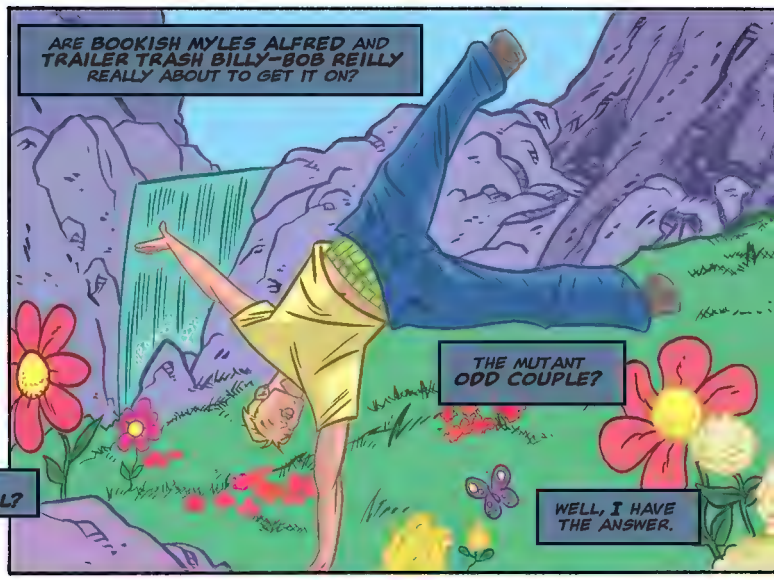
DEAD GIRL! GET DOWN!

IT'S OKAY.
I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING.

THAT HONEY SURE KNOW WHAT SHE—

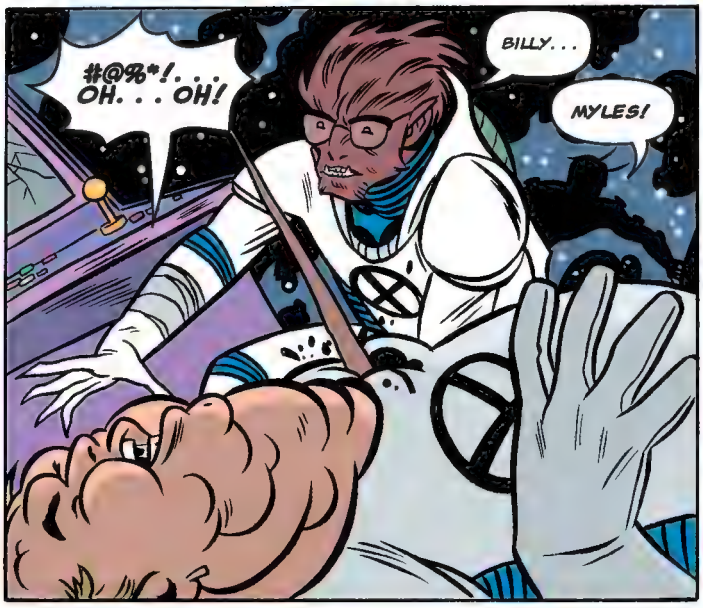

BILLY-BOB!


SO. HERE WE ARE. AND I GUESS YOU'RE THINKING, IF YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT THIS AT ALL:
IS BILLY-BOB A LATENT HOMOSEXUAL?


ARE BOOKISH MYLES ALFRED AND TRAILER TRASH BILLY-BOB REILLY REALLY ABOUT TO GET IT ON?
THE MUTANT ODD COUPLE?
WELL, I HAVE THE ANSWER.

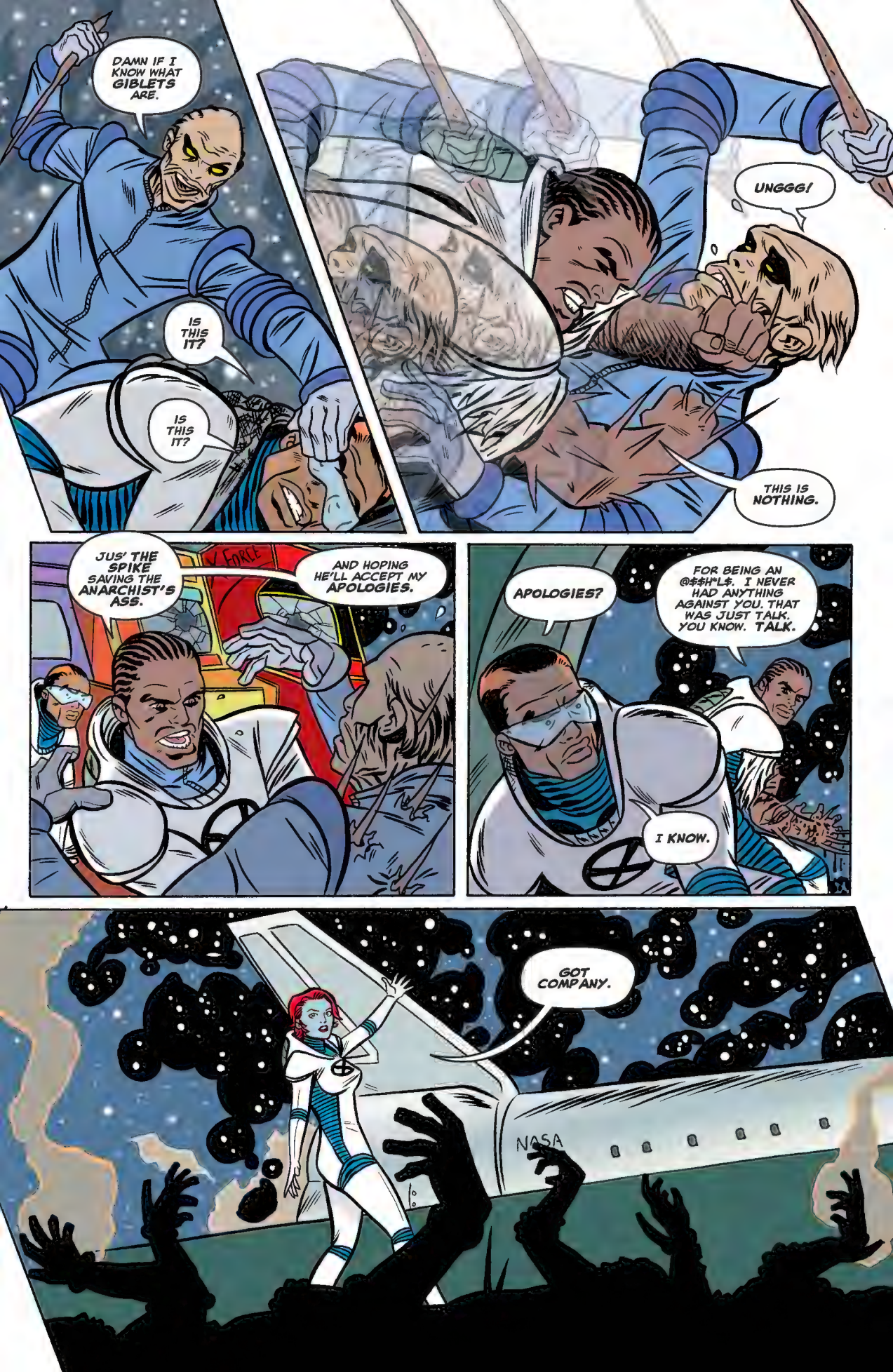
MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS.
I HATE THIS.
YOU DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH I—

ARHHH!

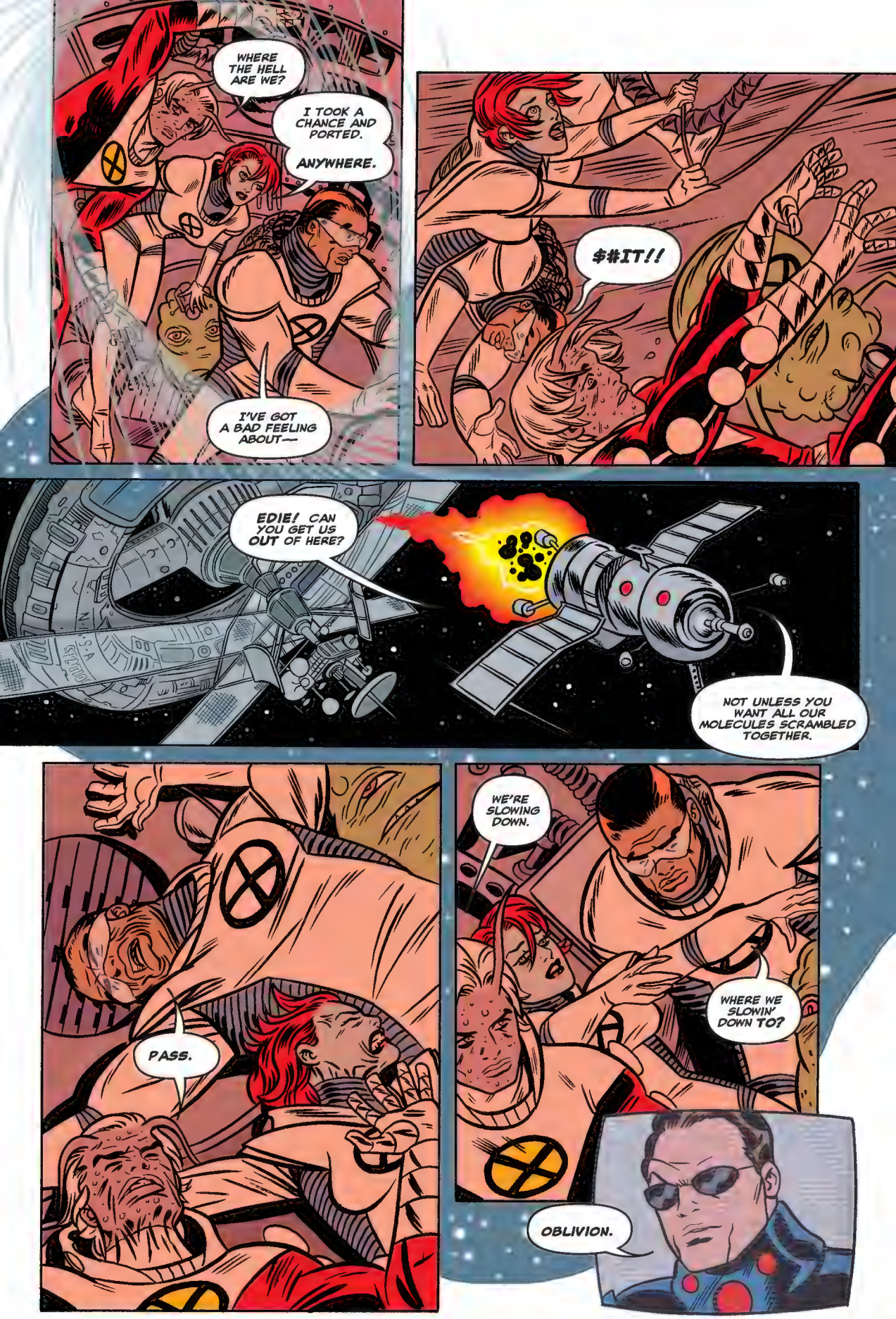

#@%*!... OH... OH!
BILLY...
MYLES!

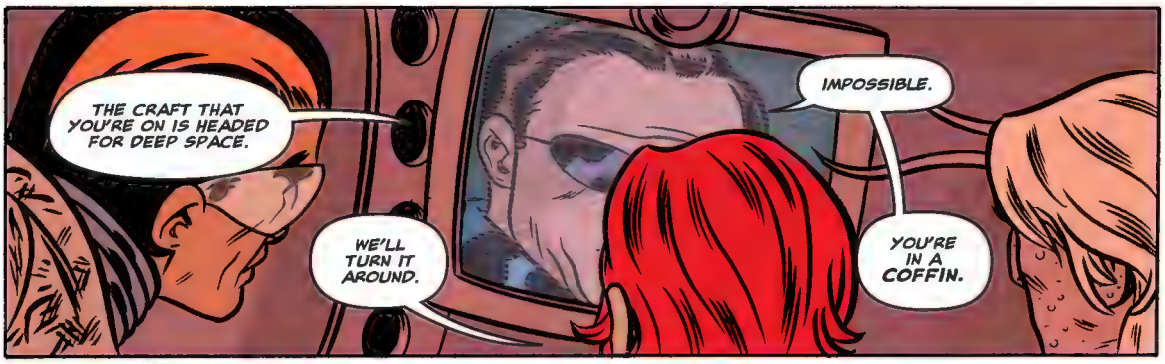
GO AND HELP DEAD GIRL.
LEAVE HIM.

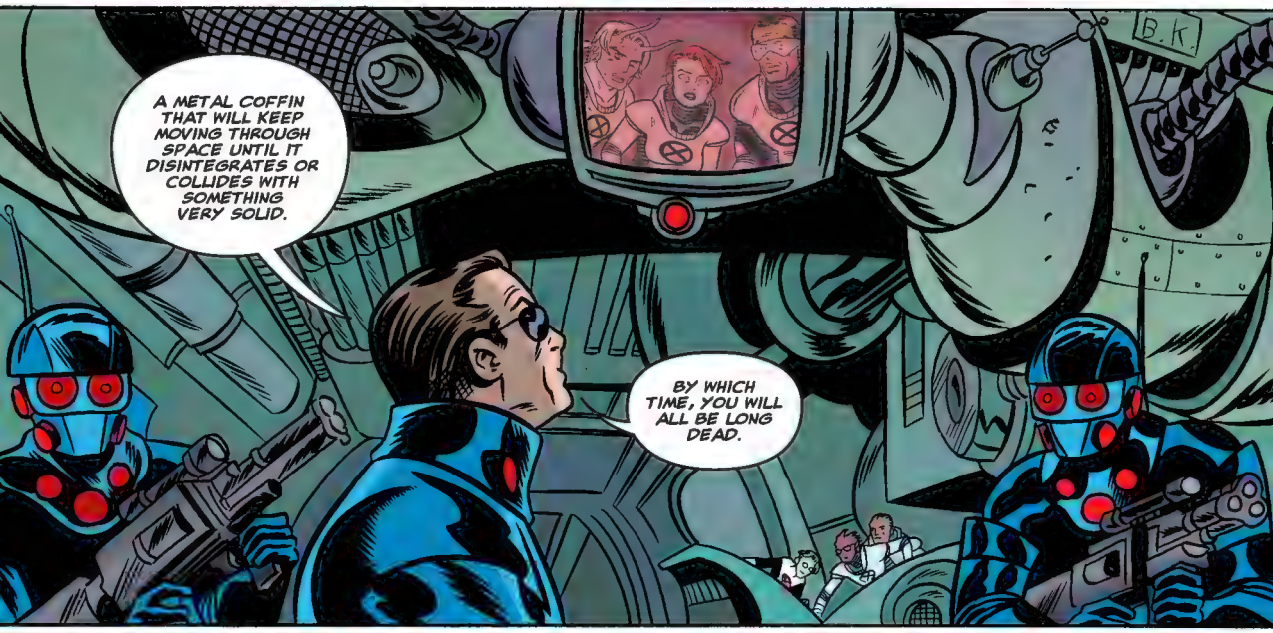
WE'RE X-FORCE. NONE OF US IS MORE OR LESS IMPORTANT THAN ANOTHER IN THIS TEAM. NO ROOM FOR PERSONAL FEELINGS.
SO PUT THAT MAN DOWN AND GO HELP DEAD GIRL.
THAT'S AN ORDER.
GO FORTH AND MULTIPLY WITH YOURSELF.
WOW. DEAD GIRL.
. . . IF I COME THROUGH THIS. . . I'D LIKE TO GET TO KNOW HER BETTER.
BECAUSE SHE CAN HAVE PARTS OF HER FACE AND LIMBS AND STUFF BLOWN AWAY YET STILL KEEP FIGHTING?
WHATEVER CREASES YOUR TROUSERS.


DAMN IF I KNOW WHAT GIBLETS ARE.
IS THIS IT?
IS THIS IT?
UNGGG!
THIS IS NOTHING.
JUS' THE SPIKE SAVING THE ANARCHIST'S ASS.
AND HOPING HE'LL ACCEPT MY APOLOGIES.
APOLOGIES?
FOR BEING AN @$$H*L$. I NEVER HAD ANYTHING AGAINST YOU. THAT WAS JUST TALK. YOU KNOW. TALK.
I KNOW.
GOT COMPANY.
NASA

ALL THE BUSH RANGERS ARE DEAD OR WOUNDED BUT THE AMERICAN PUBLIC DON'T NEED TO KNOW THAT. THE OFFICIAL LINE WILL BE THAT YOU SAVED US.
CHANGE OF PLAN. THE OFFICIAL LINE WILL BE THAT WE TRIED TO SAVE YOU.
BUT IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE... THINGS DIDN'T GO QUITE ACCORDING TO PLAN.
X-FORCE ALWAYS DID HAVE A PRETTY HIGH MORTALITY RATE.
ZAAM!
WHERE THE HELL ARE THEY?


WHERE THE HELL ARE WE?
I TOOK A CHANCE AND PORTED.
ANYWHERE.
I'VE GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT—
$#IT!!
EDIE! CAN YOU GET US OUT OF HERE?
NOT UNLESS YOU WANT ALL OUR MOLECULES SCRAMBLED TOGETHER.
PASS.
WE'RE SLOWING DOWN.
WHERE WE SLOWIN' DOWN TO?
OBLIVION.

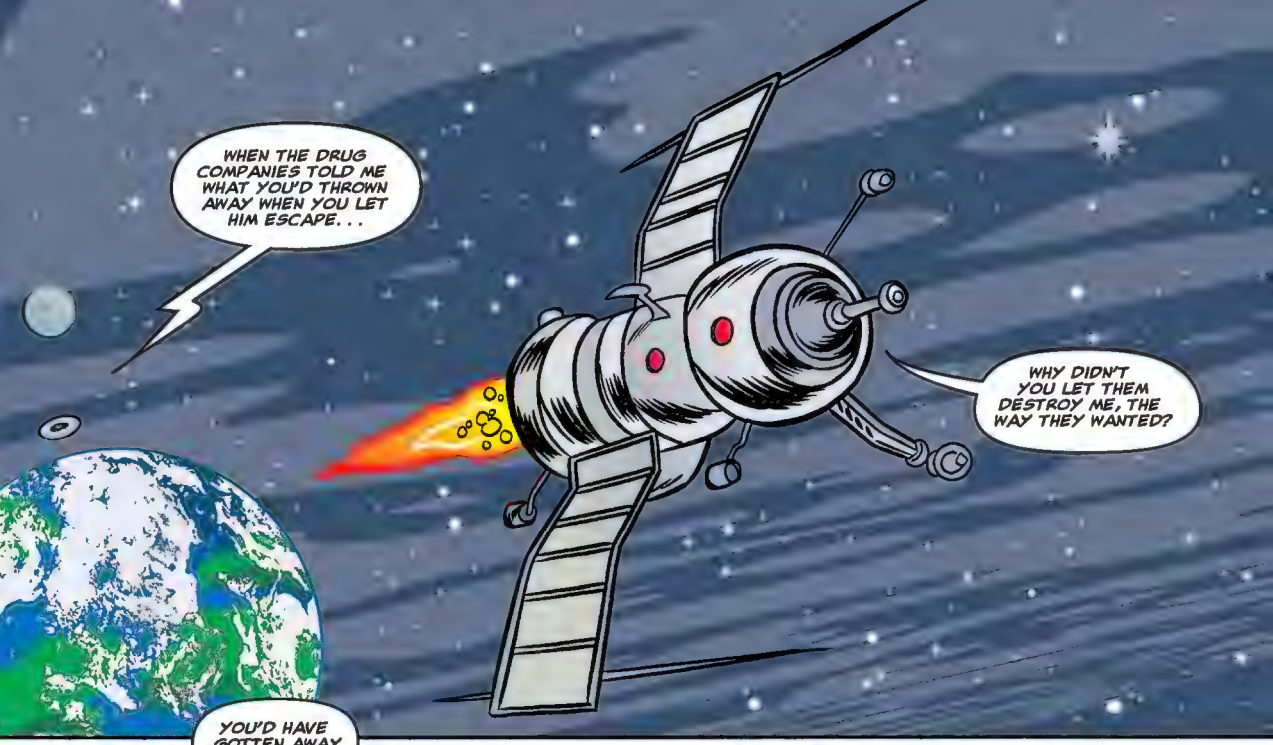

THE CRAFT THAT YOU'RE ON IS HEADED FOR DEEP SPACE.
WE'LL TURN IT AROUND.
IMPOSSIBLE.
YOU'RE IN A COFFIN.

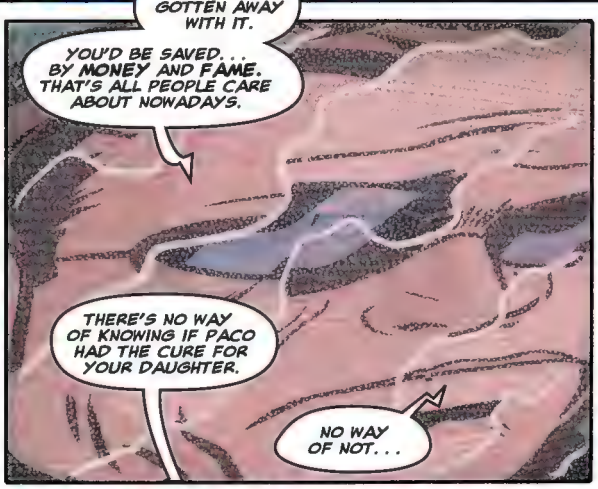

A METAL COFFIN THAT WILL KEEP MOVING THROUGH SPACE UNTIL IT DISINTEGRATES OR COLLIDES WITH SOMETHING VERY SOLID.
BY WHICH TIME, YOU WILL ALL BE LONG DEAD.
B.K

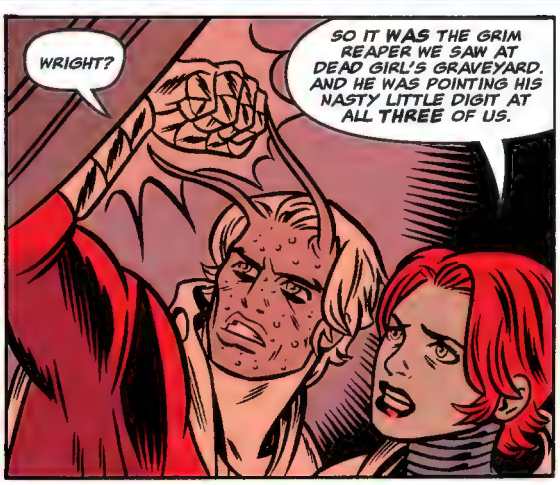
TURN US AROUND, WRIGHT! WE PLAYED BALL! THE C.I.A. ARE GONNA COME OUT SMELLIN' OF ROSES.
WHY ARE YOU DOIN' THIS?
BECAUSE...
BECAUSE LOUISE...

BECAUSE MY DAUGHTER, LOUISE, FELL OVER. SHE WAS ONLY THREE SO SHE OFTEN FELL OVER BUT THIS WAS DIFFERENT.
THEY CONDUCTED TESTS AT THE HOSPITAL.

ALL THEY CAN DO IS KEEP HER ALIVE AS LONG AS POSSIBLE AND HOPE THERE'S SOME KIND OF MEDICAL BREAKTHROUGH.
THE KIND OF BREAKTHROUGH PACO PEREZ MIGHT HAVE GIVEN US.


WHEN THE DRUG COMPANIES TOLD ME WHAT YOU'D THROWN AWAY WHEN YOU LET HIM ESCAPE...
WHY DIDN'T YOU LET THEM DESTROY ME, THE WAY THEY WANTED?


YOU'D HAVE GOTTEN AWAY WITH IT.
YOU'D BE SAVED... BY MONEY AND FAME. THAT'S ALL PEOPLE CARE ABOUT NOWADAYS.
THERE'S NO WAY OF KNOWING IF PACO HAD THE CURE FOR YOUR DAUGHTER.
NO WAY OF NOT...


WRIGHT?
SO IT WAS THE GRIM REAPER WE SAW AT DEAD GIRL'S GRAVEYARD. AND HE WAS POINTING HIS NASTY LITTLE DIGIT AT ALL THREE OF US.

SCARED?
GET OUTTA HERE.
LIAR. I'M SENSITIVE, REMEMBER?
I REMEMBER.

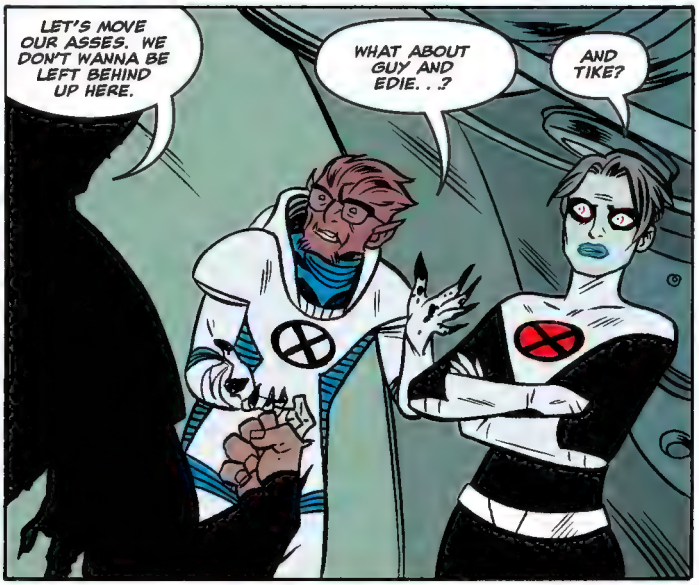
SORRY TO BE A THIRD WHEEL BUT I MIGHT JUS' HAVE FOUND A WAY OUT OF THIS TIN CAN.

IT'S TOO LATE. THE POPULAR MEMBERS OF X-FORCE ARE AS GOOD AS DEAD.
WE'RE POPULAR... JUST IN A DIFFERENT WAY.
AND I HAVEN'T BEEN AROUND LONG ENOUGH TO ESTABLISH MYSELF.
MORE TO THE POINT... IF YOU DON'T FIND SOME WAY OF GETTING THEM BACK, WE'RE GOING TO DO SOME VERY UNPOPULAR THINGS TO YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM.
YOU CAN DO WHAT YOU WANT, THERE'S NOTHING...
THUK
AUUHHGH!

HEAVY.
PLEASE TELL US. . . WHY THAT WAS NECESSARY.

SAW HIM GO FOR SOMETHING. MIGHT'VE BEEN SOME KINDA LASER WEAPON THINGY. YOU KNOW WHAT THESE GUYS ARE LIKE.

CHECK IT. FOOL WAS TRYIN' TO SHOOT US ALL WID A CRUDDY PHOTOGRAPH!
HAH HAH HAH


LET'S MOVE OUR ASSES. WE DON'T WANNA BE LEFT BEHIND UP HERE.
WHAT ABOUT GUY AND EDIE. . .?
AND TIKE?

YOU HEARD THE MAN. THEY'RE DEAD.
WE'RE X-FORCE NOW.

SOME KINDA SPACIFIED LIFE-BOAT THING. GOT ITS OWN INDEPENDENT CONTROLS. IF THE GODS ARE SMILING ON US WE MIGHT JUST GET BACK TO THE SPACE STATION.
BUT. . . WHITNEY HOUSTON, WE GOTTA PROBLEM.

BOOM
THERE'S ONLY ROOM FOR TWO.
AND MAYBE DOOP.

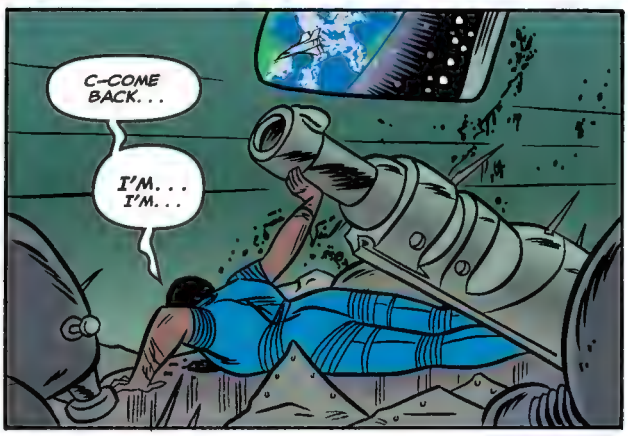
I'M RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL OF THIS. I MADE THE DECISION TO LET PACO PEREZ FREE. I'LL TAKE THE CONSEQUENCES.
DAMN, YOU JUST HAVE TO WRAP YOUR ASS AROUND THAT MORAL HIGH-GROUND, DON'T YOU?

YOU MIGHT BE LEADER OF THIS GROUP, BUT YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DECIDE WHICH ONE OF US DIES.
YOU DON'T HAVE THAT RIGHT. JUST LIKE YOU DIDN'T HAVE THAT RIGHT WITH PACO PEREZ.
SO WHAT DO WE DO, EDIE?

WE DO WHAT ALL INTELLIGENT, THINKING PEOPLE DO IN TIMES OF EXTREME CRISIS.

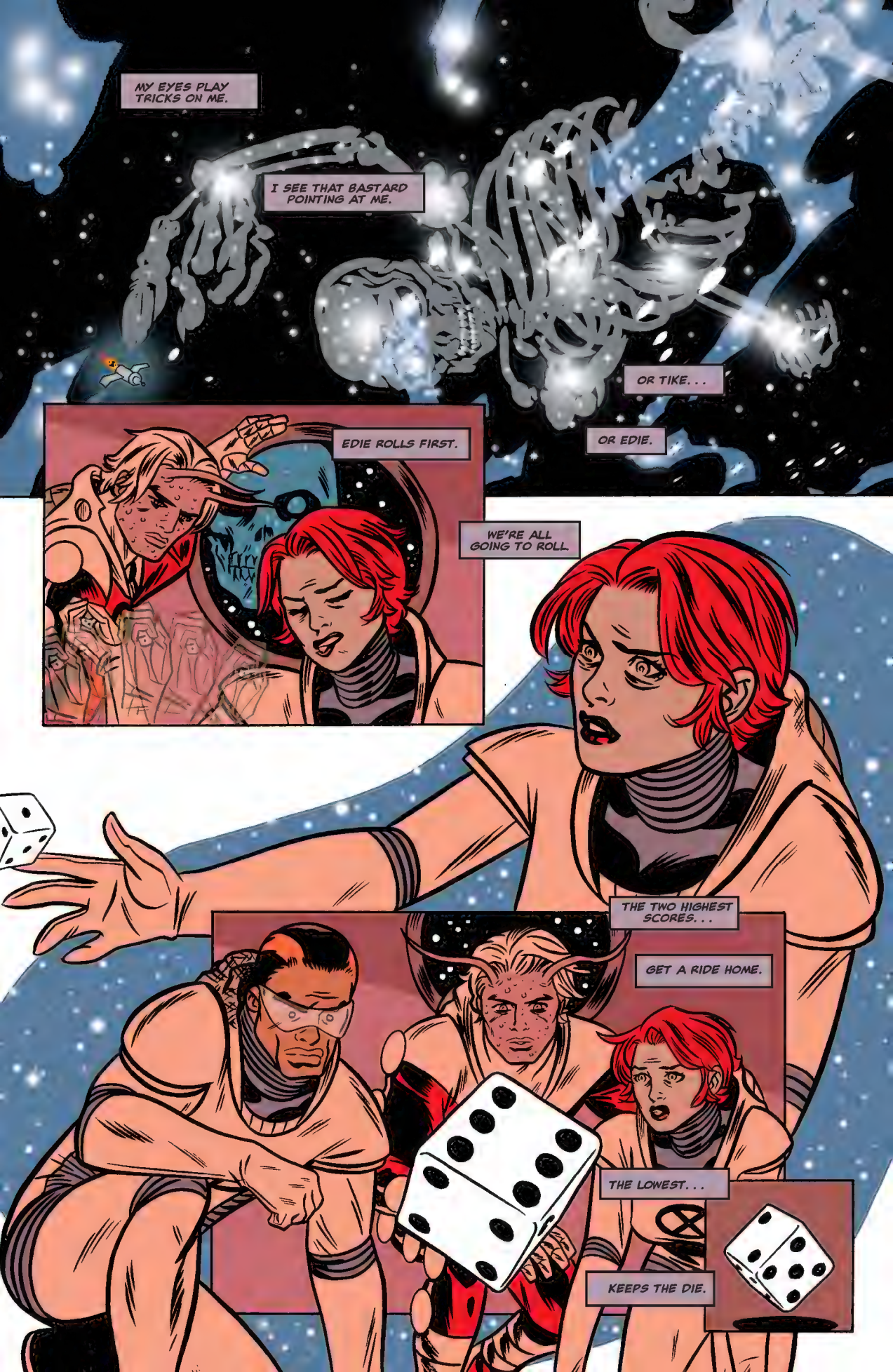
LEAVE IT TO LUCK.

UNGGNNN—

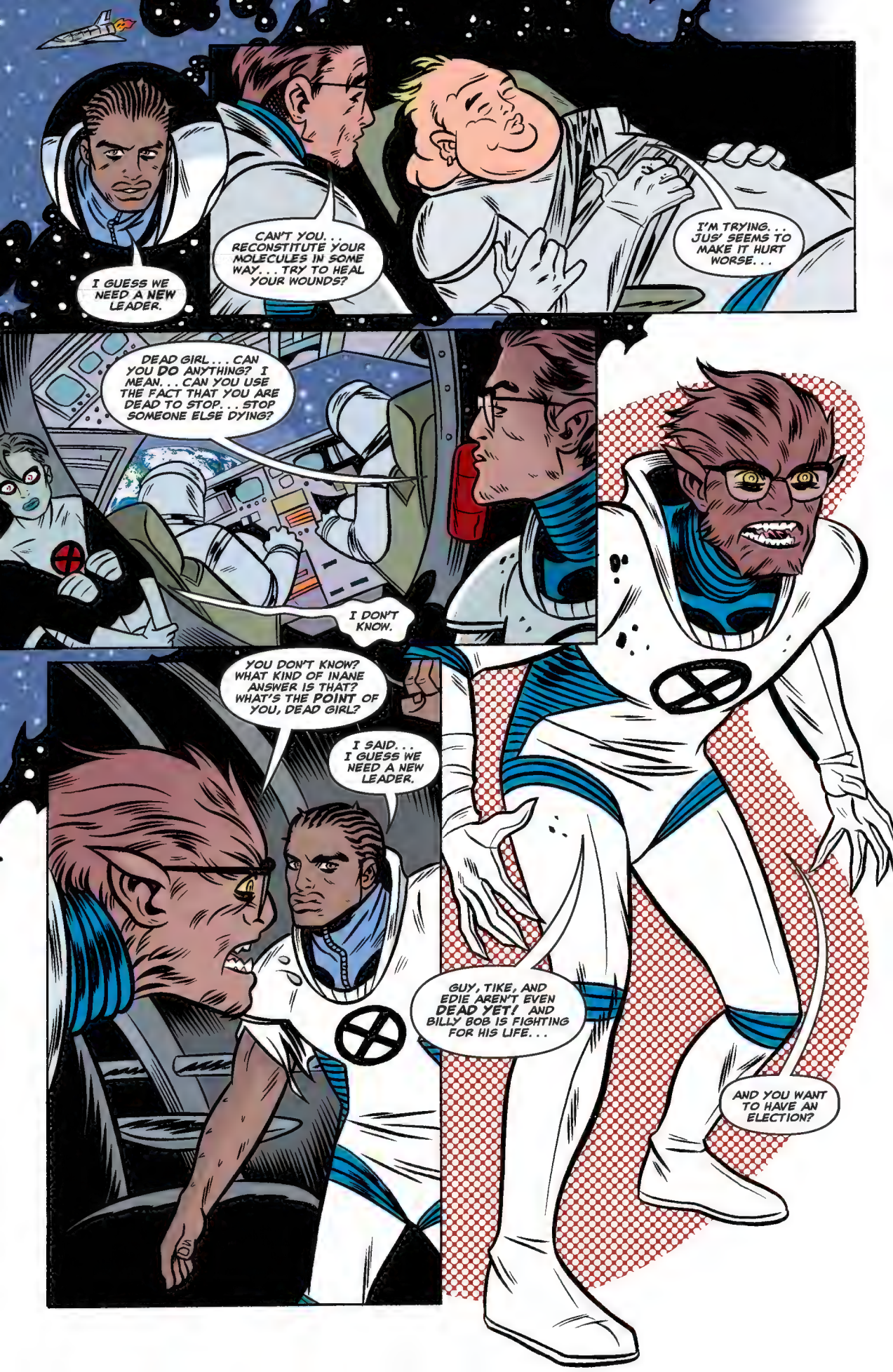

C–COME BACK...
I'M... I'M...

...I'M PART OF X–FORCE TOO...
I WAS NEVER SERIOUS... 'BOUT SWITCHING SIDES... I WAS TRYING TO TRICK THOSE MOTHERS...

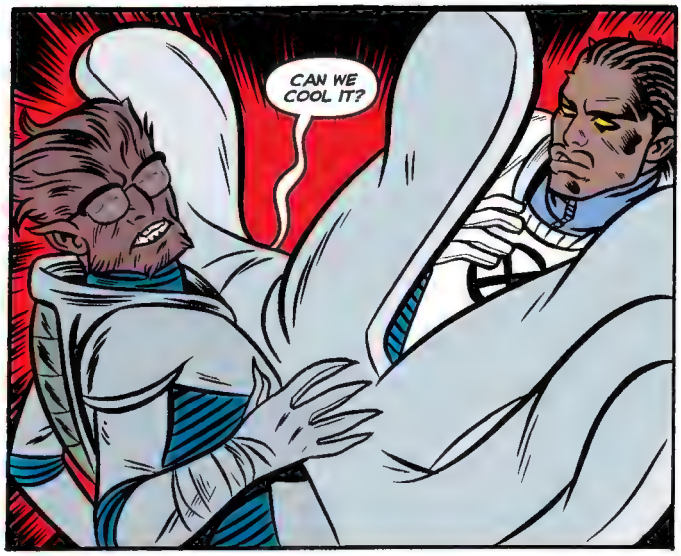
I AIN'T NO TRAITOR.
I'M THE SPIKE.

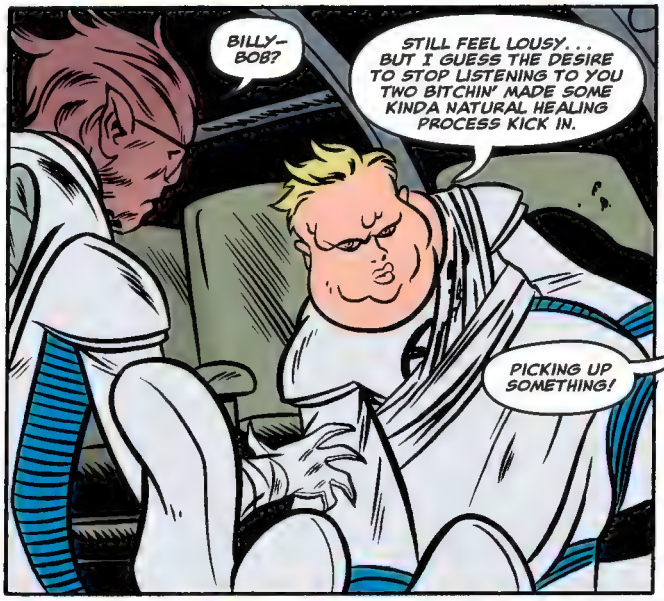

MY EYES PLAY TRICKS ON ME.
I SEE THAT BASTARD POINTING AT ME.
OR TIKE...
OR EDIE.
EDIE ROLLS FIRST.
WE'RE ALL GOING TO ROLL.
THE TWO HIGHEST SCORES...
GET A RIDE HOME.
THE LOWEST...
KEEPS THE DIE.

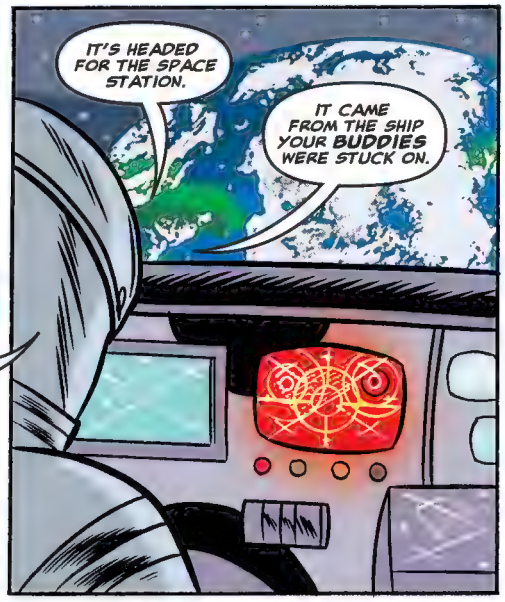
X-FORCE #128


I GUESS WE NEED A NEW LEADER.
CAN'T YOU... RECONSTITUTE YOUR MOLECULES IN SOME WAY... TRY TO HEAL YOUR WOUNDS?
I'M TRYING... JUS' SEEMS TO MAKE IT HURT WORSE...
DEAD GIRL... CAN YOU DO ANYTHING? I MEAN... CAN YOU USE THE FACT THAT YOU ARE DEAD TO STOP... STOP SOMEONE ELSE DYING?
I DON'T KNOW.
YOU DON'T KNOW? WHAT KIND OF INANE ANSWER IS THAT? WHAT'S THE POINT OF YOU, DEAD GIRL?
I SAID... I GUESS WE NEED A NEW LEADER.
GUY, TIKE, AND EDIE AREN'T EVEN DEAD YET! AND BILLY BOB IS FIGHTING FOR HIS LIFE...
AND YOU WANT TO HAVE AN ELECTION?

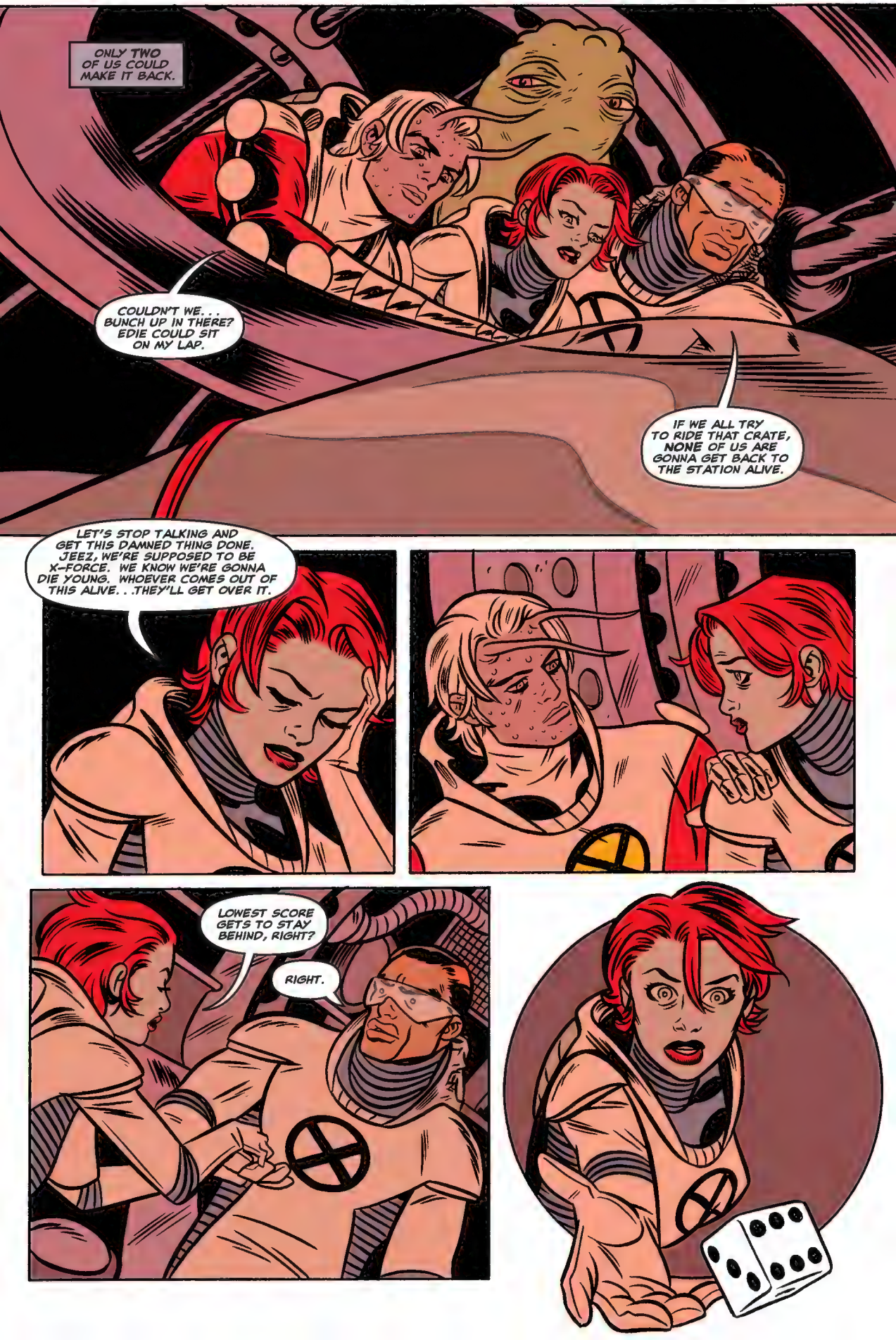
OR MAYBE YOU DON'T THINK I SHOULD GIVE A DAMN ABOUT BILLY-BOB. THAT KIND OF CONCERN... THAT ONE MAN MIGHT HAVE FOR ANOTHER... IT TURNS YOUR STOMACH, DOESN'T IT?
OUTTA MY FACE, BOY


CAN WE COOL IT?


BILLY-BOB?
STILL FEEL LOUSY... BUT I GUESS THE DESIRE TO STOP LISTENING TO YOU TWO BITCHIN' MADE SOME KINDA NATURAL HEALING PROCESS KICK IN.
PICKING UP SOMETHING!


IT'S HEADED FOR THE SPACE STATION.
IT CAME FROM THE SHIP YOUR BUDDIES WERE STUCK ON.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW, THEY MADE IT.

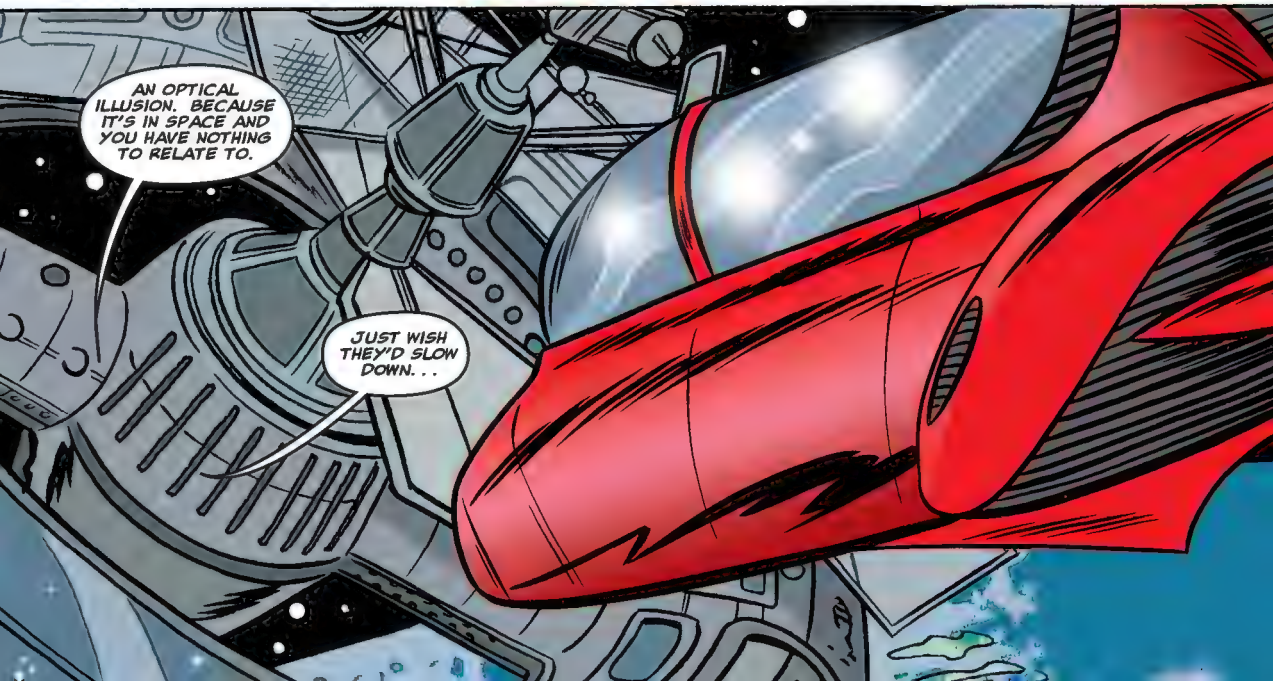

ONLY TWO OF US COULD MAKE IT BACK.
COULDN'T WE... BUNCH UP IN THERE? EDIE COULD SIT ON MY LAP.
IF WE ALL TRY TO RIDE THAT CRATE, NONE OF US ARE GONNA GET BACK TO THE STATION ALIVE.
LET'S STOP TALKING AND GET THIS DAMNED THING DONE. JEEZ, WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE X-FORCE. WE KNOW WE'RE GONNA DIE YOUNG. WHOEVER COMES OUT OF THIS ALIVE...THEY'LL GET OVER IT.
LOWEST SCORE GETS TO STAY BEHIND, RIGHT?
RIGHT.

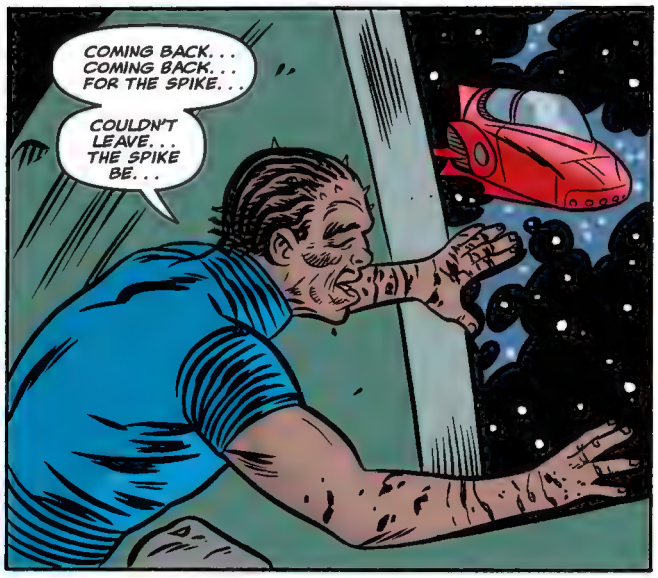
THIS IS MYLES. WE'VE RETURNED TO THE SPACE STATION TO PICK YOU UP AND TAKE YOU ALL BACK TO MOTHER EARTH.
DO YOU READ ME? GUY? EDIE? TIKE?

CAN'T GET RADIO CONTACT. THEY'RE COMING IN TOO FAST THOUGH. WONDER WHO'S DRIVING THAT THING?
COULD BE EDIE. SHE'S VERY INCAUTIOUS BEHIND THE WHEEL.
TIKE. HE'S THE ANARCHIST. GUY WOULD BE MORE CAREFUL.

WHASSUP, SPIKEY? AIN'T QUITE AS CHEERFUL AS YOU WERE.
YOU DON'T HAVE A PROBLEM WITH US COMING BACK TO PICK UP OUR TEAMMATES?
I SAY I HAD A PROBLEM?
DIDN'T HAVE TO.

THE SHIP SEEMS SO LITTLE.


AN OPTICAL ILLUSION. BECAUSE IT'S IN SPACE AND YOU HAVE NOTHING TO RELATE TO.
JUST WISH THEY'D SLOW DOWN. . .

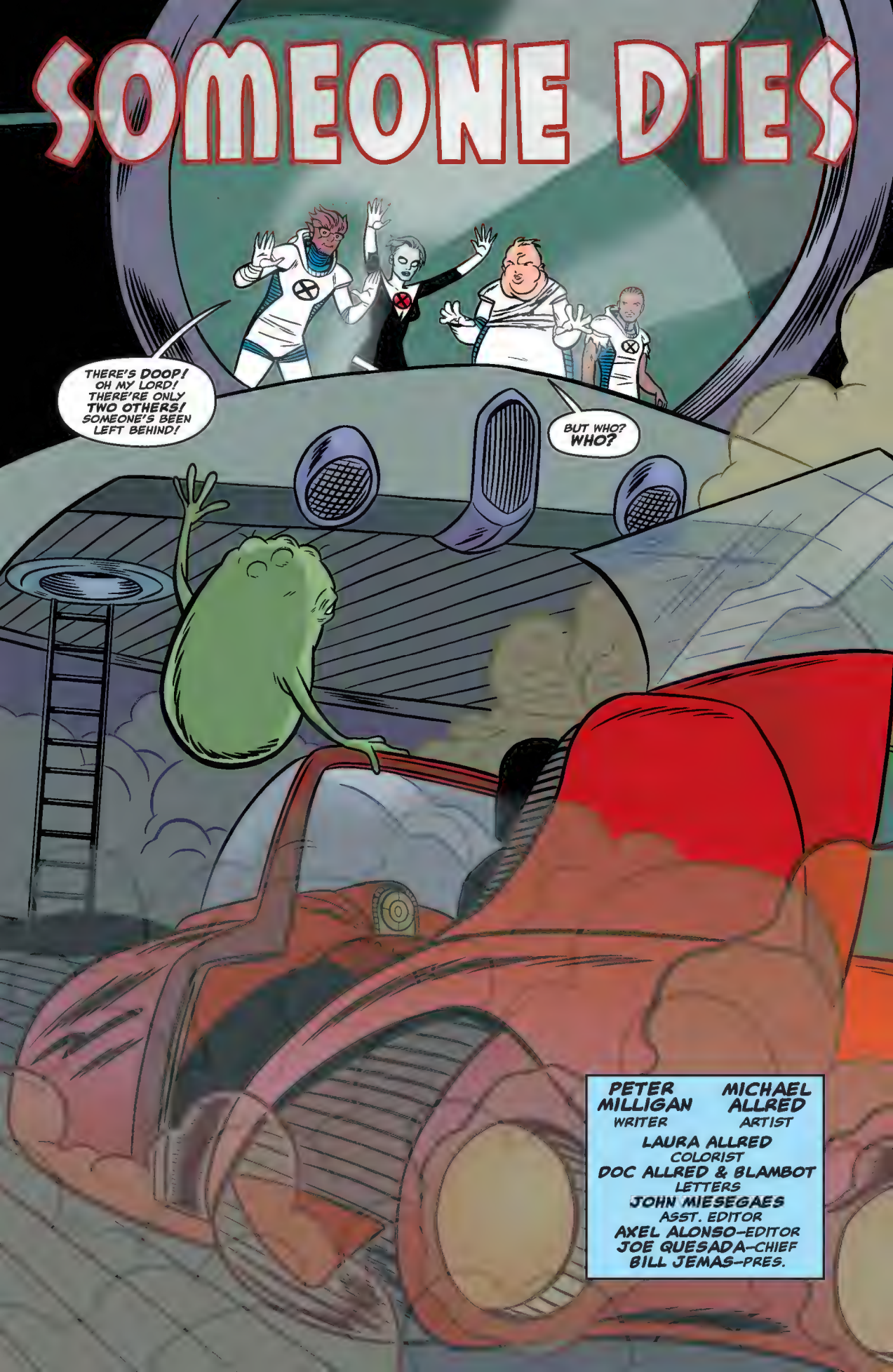

COMING BACK... COMING BACK... FOR THE SPIKE...
COULDN'T LEAVE... THE SPIKE BE...

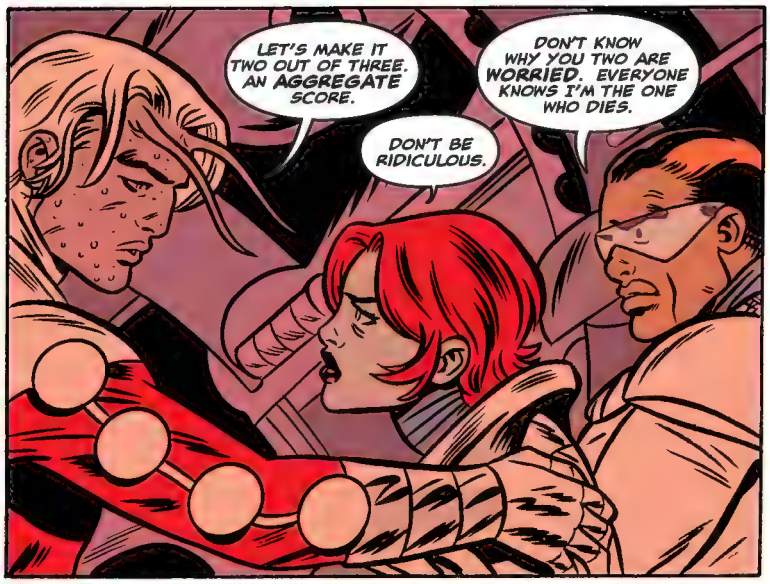
S#!*#!

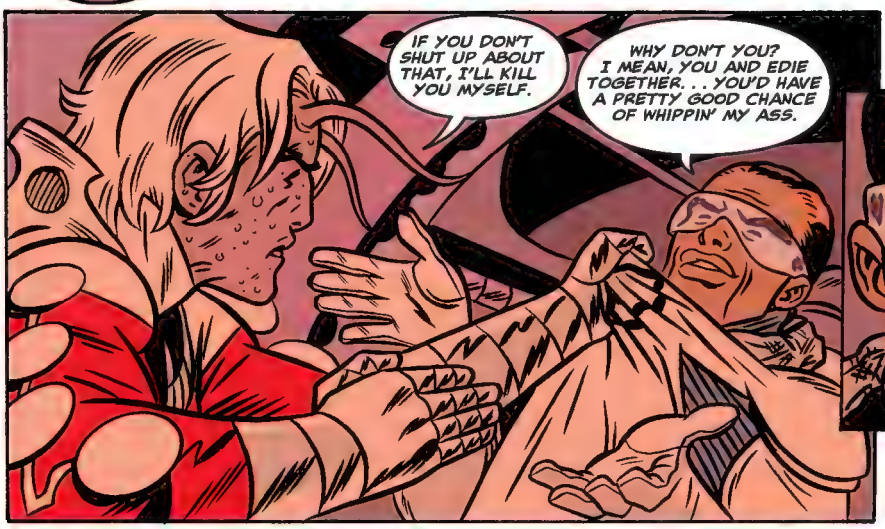
FTHOOMP

WELL... IT HASN'T BURST INTO FLAMES YET. THAT'S ALWAYS A POSITIVE SIGN.
THE DOORS ARE OPENING!

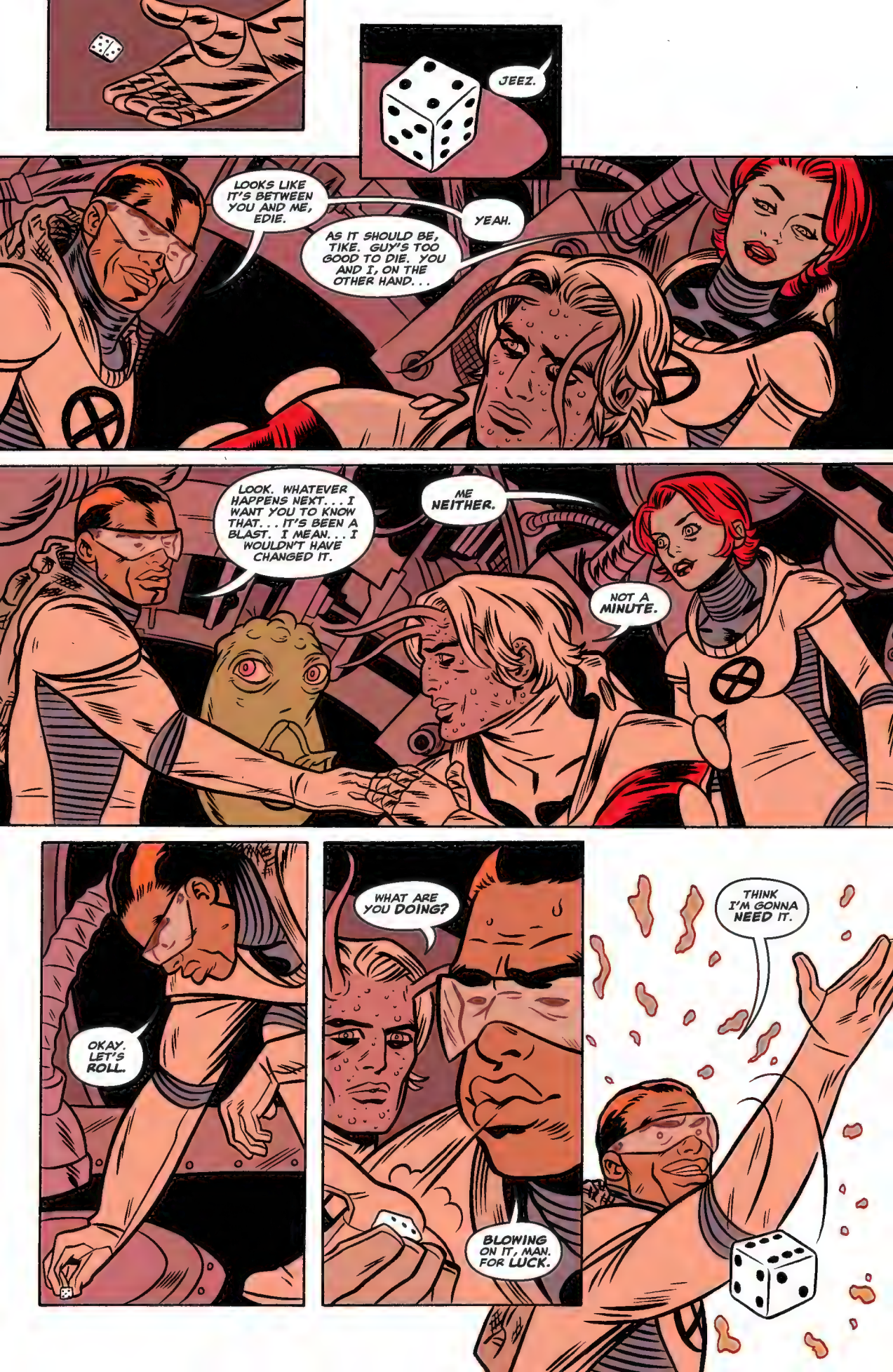
THEY'RE GETTING OUT!
THEY'RE ALIVE!

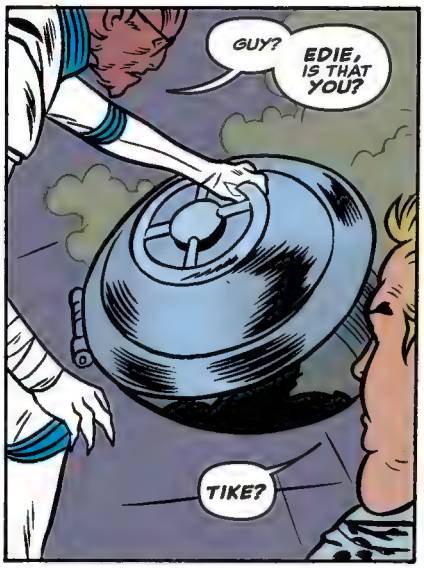

SOMEONE DIES
THERE'S DOOP! OH MY LORD! THERE'RE ONLY TWO OTHERS! SOMEONE'S BEEN LEFT BEHIND!
BUT WHO? WHO?
PETER MILLIGAN WRITER
MICHAEL ALLRED ARTIST
LAURA ALLRED COLORIST
DOC ALLRED & BLAMBOT LETTERS
JOHN MIESEGAES ASST. EDITOR
AXEL ALONSO-EDITOR
JOE QUESADA-CHIEF
BILL JEMAS-PRES.

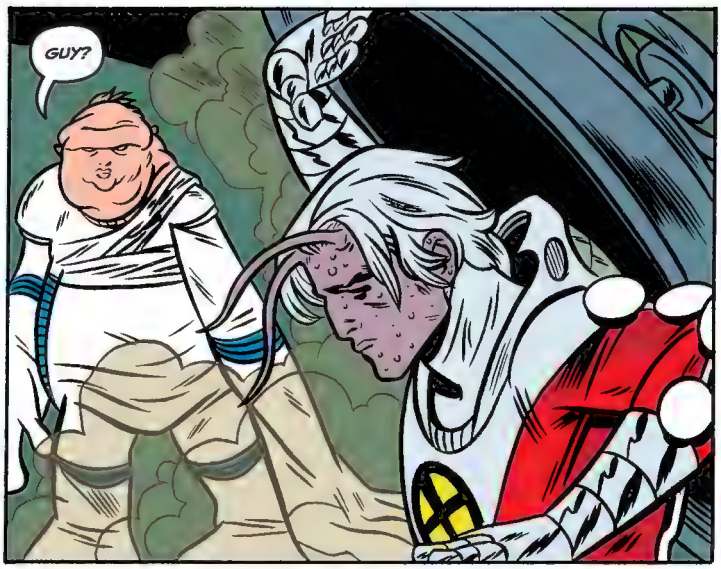


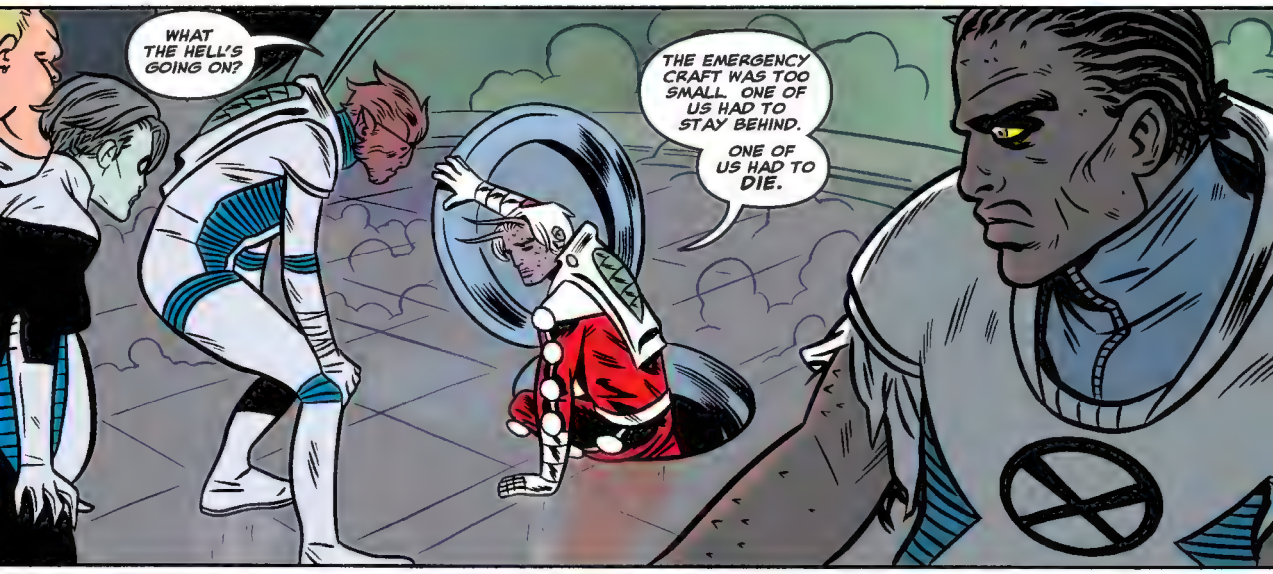


YOU COULD GET AWAY WITH IT. KILL ME. SAY I LOST THE DICE GAME. WHO'S GONNA KNOW THE TRUTH?


JEEZ.
LOOKS LIKE IT'S BETWEEN YOU AND ME, EDIE.
YEAH.
AS IT SHOULD BE, TIKE. GUY'S TOO GOOD TO DIE. YOU AND I, ON THE OTHER HAND...
LOOK. WHATEVER HAPPENS NEXT... I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT... IT'S BEEN A BLAST. I MEAN... I WOULDN'T HAVE CHANGED IT.
ME NEITHER.
NOT A MINUTE.
OKAY. LET'S ROLL.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
BLOWING ON IT, MAN. FOR LUCK.
THINK I'M GONNA NEED IT.


GUY?
EDIE, IS THAT YOU?
TIKE?


GUY?


WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON?
THE EMERGENCY CRAFT WAS TOO SMALL. ONE OF US HAD TO STAY BEHIND.
ONE OF US HAD TO DIE.

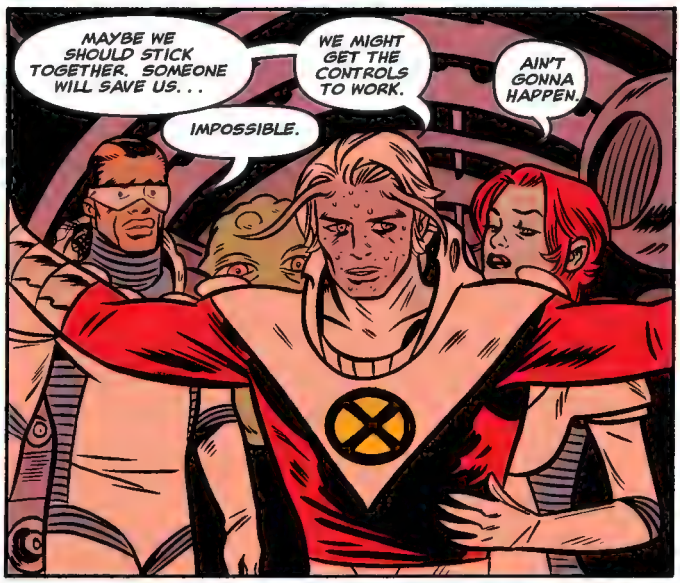
LOOK AT THE WAY GUY SMITH IS CRYING.
CAN ONLY MEAN ONE THING.
THAT'S YOU, AIN'T IT, TIKE?

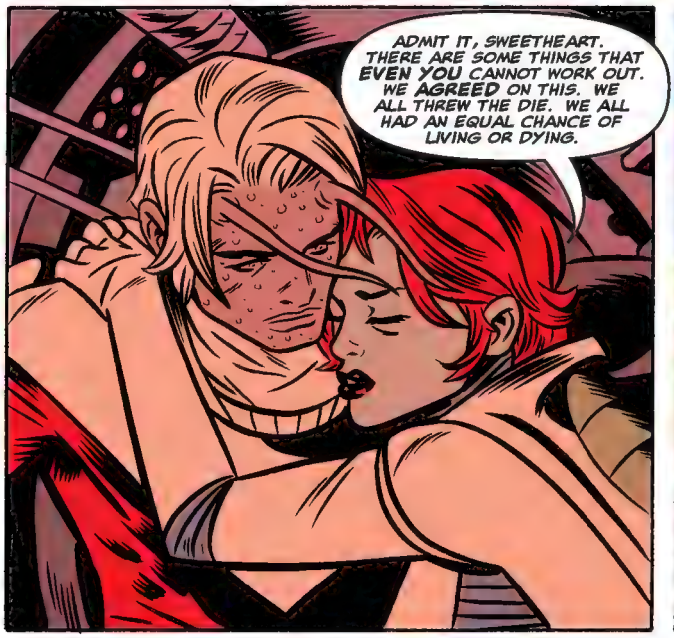
YOU LEFT EDIE BEHIND, YOU BASTARDS!

THIS DOESN'T SEEM, RIGHT. THE END OF A LIFE... DECIDED ON THE ROLL OF A DIE.
IT JUST SEEMS SO DAMN ARBITRARY.

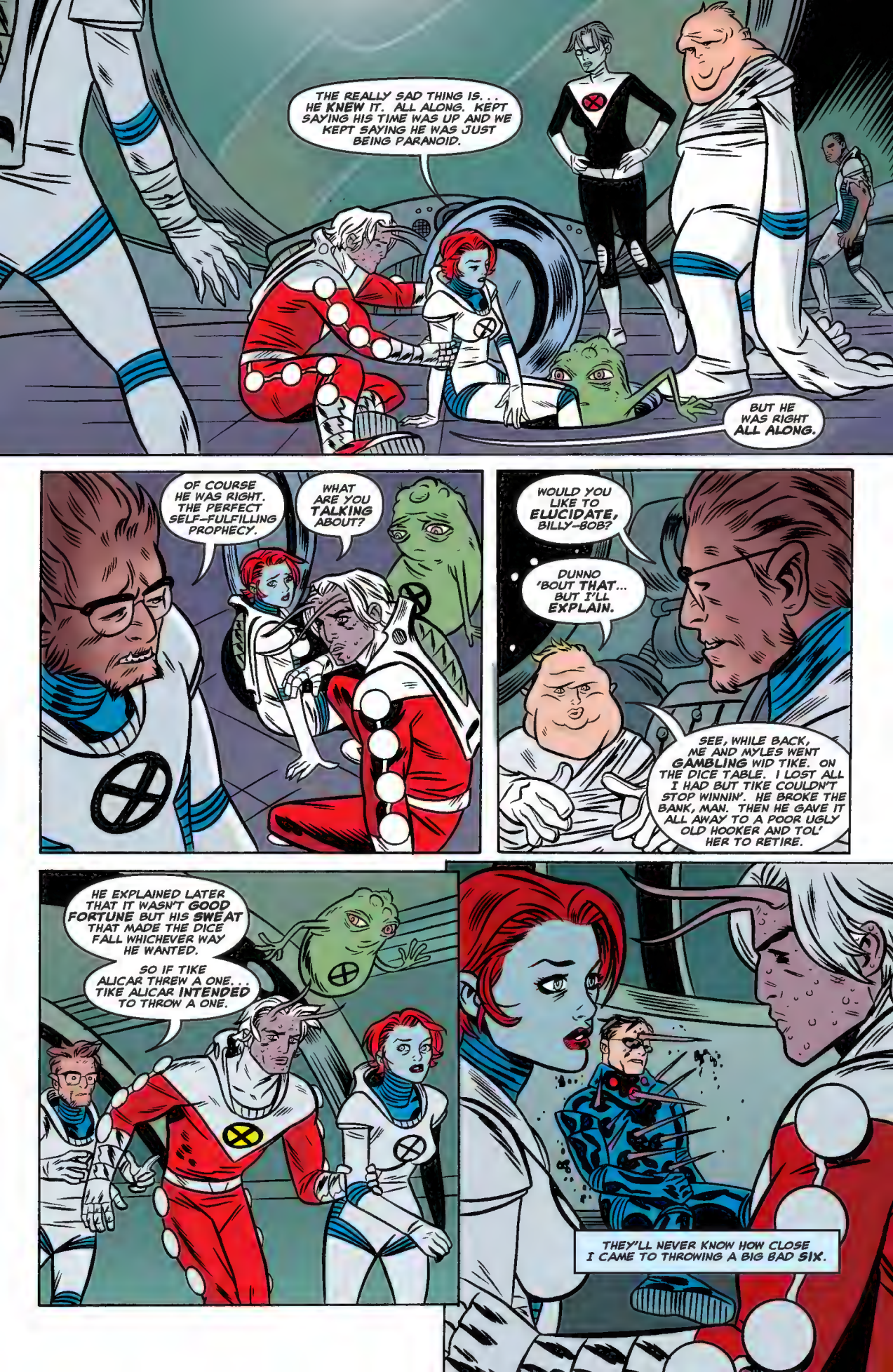
AS ARBITRARY AS A GENETIC GLITCH THAT MAKES ME CAPABLE OF TELEPORTING GREAT DISTANCES? OR TIKE CAPABLE OF DOING WEIRD STUFF WITH HIS SWEAT GLANDS?
AS ARBITRARY AS THAT AGENT WRIGHT'S DAUGHTER LOUISE BEING THE ONE IN TEN THOUSAND WHO HAS AN INCURABLE ILLNESS?

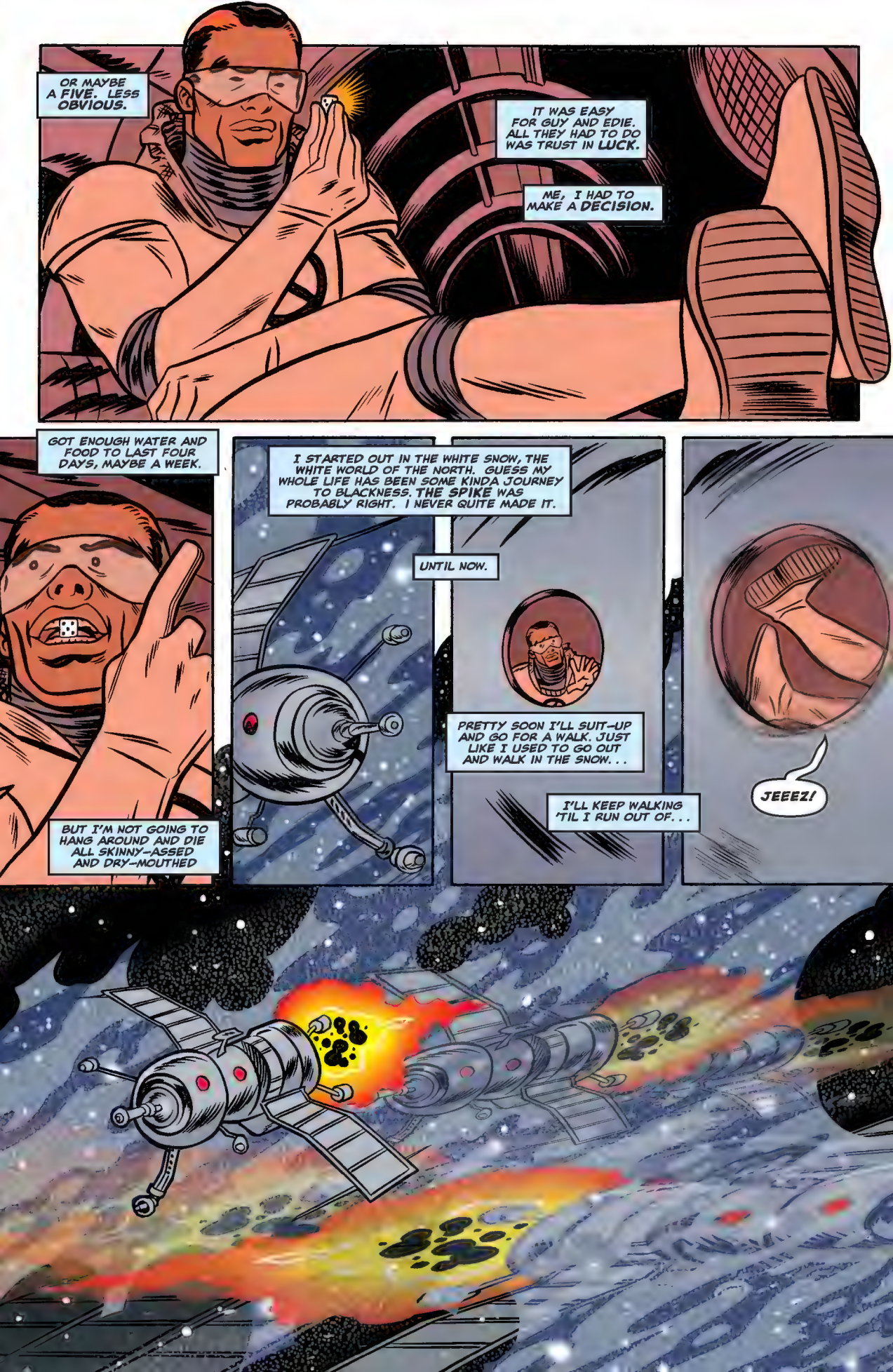
EDIE'S RIGHT. EVERYTHING'S ARBITRARY.
BUT THE POINT OF LIVING IS TO TRY TO MAKE SENSE... TO CARVE SOME KIND OF MEANING OUT OF WHAT SEEMS TO BE AN ARBITRARY UNIVERSE.
SO WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST, MR. PHILOSOPHER-MAN? THAT NONE OF US GET OUT OF THIS COFFIN-SHIP?


MAYBE WE SHOULD STICK TOGETHER. SOMEONE WILL SAVE US...
WE MIGHT GET THE CONTROLS TO WORK.
AIN'T GONNA HAPPEN.
IMPOSSIBLE.


ADMIT IT, SWEETHEART. THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT EVEN YOU CANNOT WORK OUT. WE AGREED ON THIS. WE ALL THREW THE DIE. WE ALL HAD AN EQUAL CHANCE OF LIVING OR DYING.

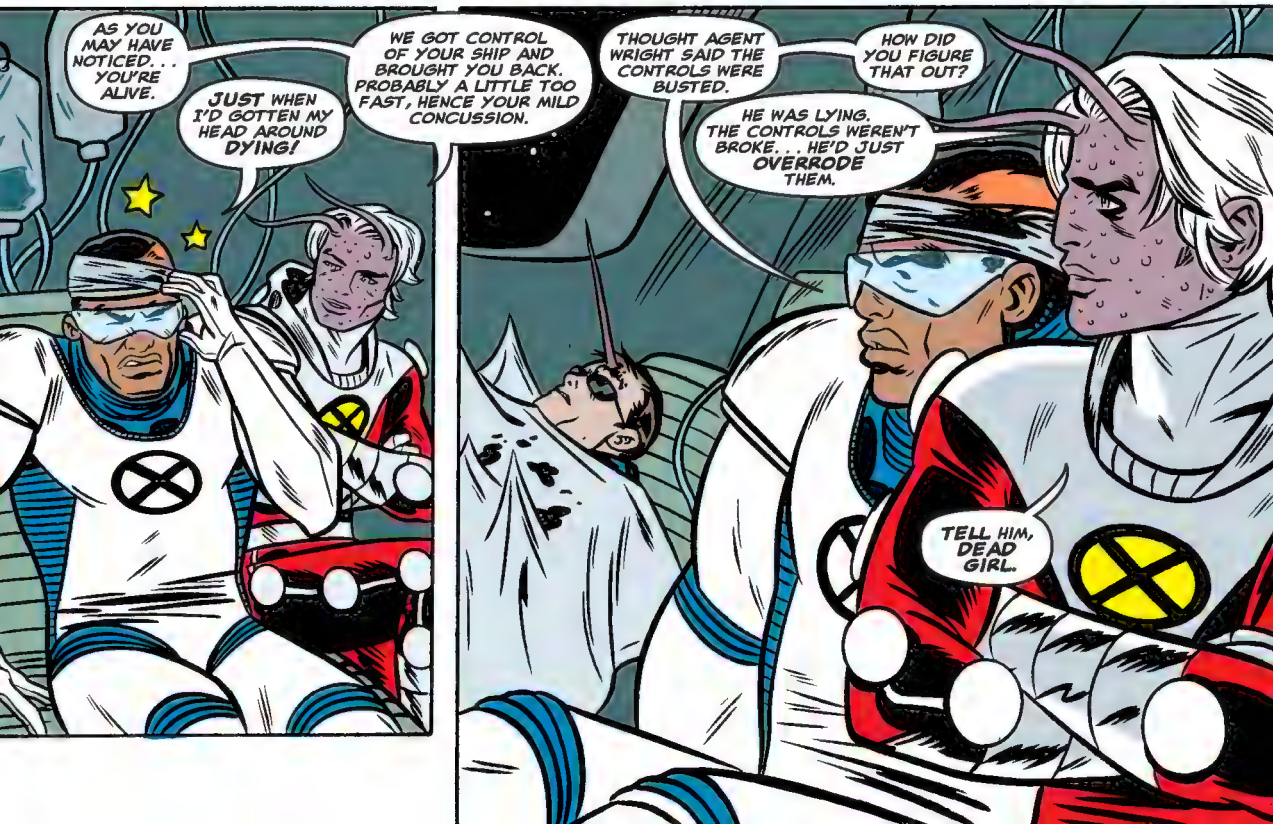
TRUE DAT.

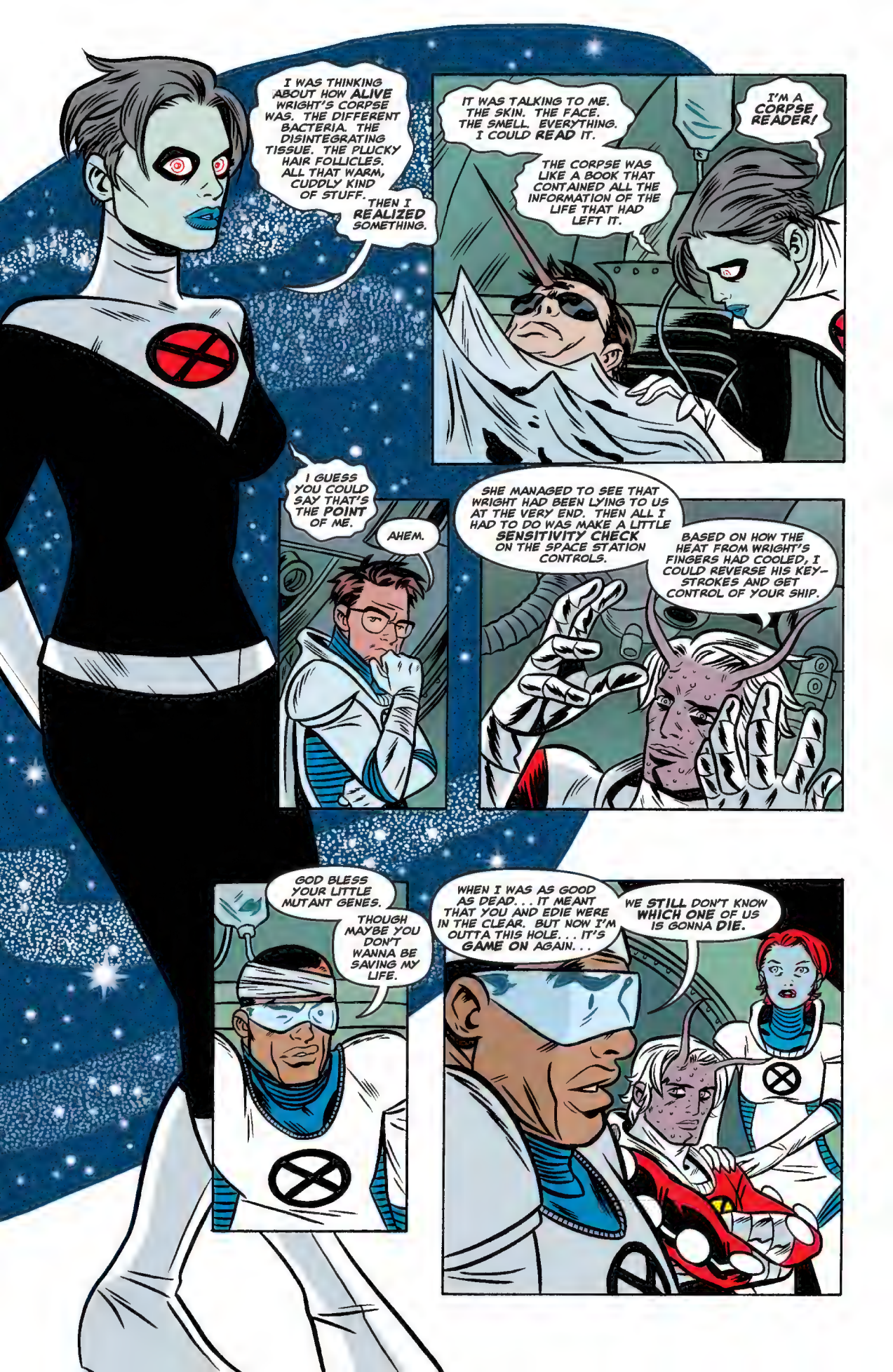

THE REALLY SAD THING IS... HE KNEW IT. ALL ALONG. KEPT SAYING HIS TIME WAS UP AND WE KEPT SAYING HE WAS JUST BEING PARANOID.
BUT HE WAS RIGHT ALL ALONG.
OF COURSE HE WAS RIGHT. THE PERFECT SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
WOULD YOU LIKE TO ELUCIDATE, BILLY-BOB?
DUNNO 'BOUT THAT... BUT I'LL EXPLAIN.
SEE, WHILE BACK, ME AND MYLES WENT GAMBLING WID TIKE. ON THE DICE TABLE. I LOST ALL I HAD BUT TIKE COULDN'T STOP WINNIN'. HE BROKE THE BANK, MAN. THEN HE GAVE IT ALL AWAY TO A POOR UGLY OLD HOOKER AND TOL' HER TO RETIRE.
HE EXPLAINED LATER THAT IT WASN'T GOOD FORTUNE BUT HIS SWEAT THAT MADE THE DICE FALL WHICHEVER WAY HE WANTED.
SO IF TIKE ALICAR THREW A ONE... TIKE ALICAR INTENDED TO THROW A ONE.
THEY'LL NEVER KNOW HOW CLOSE I CAME TO THROWING A BIG BAD SIX.


OR MAYBE A FIVE. LESS OBVIOUS.
IT WAS EASY FOR GUY AND EDIE. ALL THEY HAD TO DO WAS TRUST IN LUCK.
ME, I HAD TO MAKE A DECISION.
GOT ENOUGH WATER AND FOOD TO LAST FOUR DAYS, MAYBE A WEEK.
BUT I'M NOT GOING TO HANG AROUND AND DIE ALL SKINNY-ASSED AND DRY-MOUTHED
I STARTED OUT IN THE WHITE SNOW, THE WHITE WORLD OF THE NORTH. GUESS MY WHOLE LIFE HAS BEEN SOME KINDA JOURNEY TO BLACKNESS. THE SPIKE WAS PROBABLY RIGHT. I NEVER QUITE MADE IT.
UNTIL NOW.
PRETTY SOON I'LL SUIT-UP AND GO FOR A WALK. JUST LIKE I USED TO GO OUT AND WALK IN THE SNOW. . .
I'LL KEEP WALKING 'TIL I RUN OUT OF. . .
JEEEZ!

UGNNN?
JEEZ... ABDUCTED BY ALIENS.
PLEASE SAY YOU AIN'T GONNA... INTERNALLY INVESTIGATE ME.

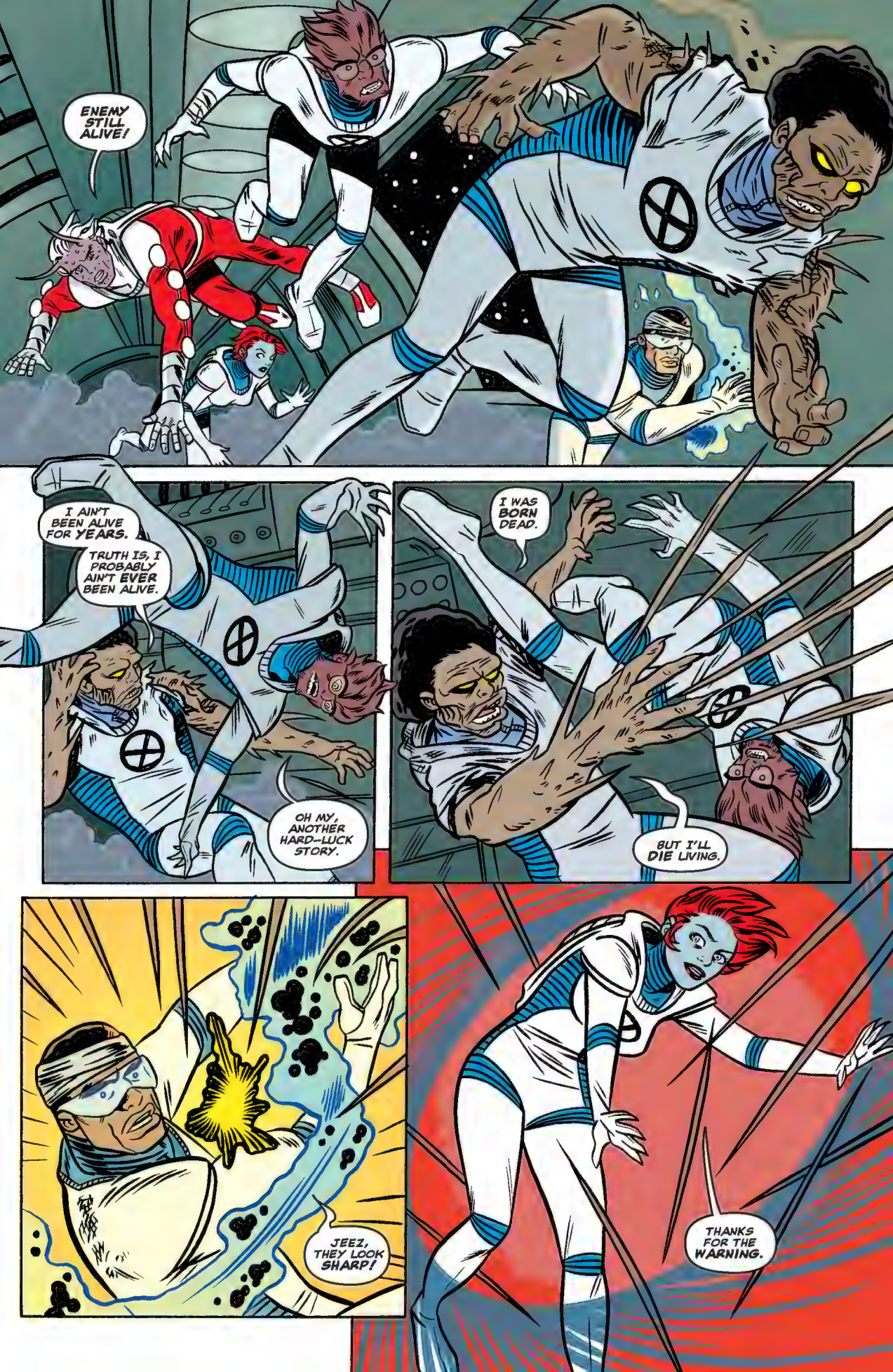
WE'RE NOT ALIENS!
AND WE HAVE NO INTENTION OF INVESTIGATING YOU, INTERNALLY OR OTHERWISE.


AS YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED... YOU'RE ALIVE.
JUST WHEN I'D GOTTEN MY HEAD AROUND DYING!
WE GOT CONTROL OF YOUR SHIP AND BROUGHT YOU BACK. PROBABLY A LITTLE TOO FAST, HENCE YOUR MILD CONCUSSION.
THOUGHT AGENT WRIGHT SAID THE CONTROLS WERE BUSTED.
HOW DID YOU FIGURE THAT OUT?
HE WAS LYING. THE CONTROLS WEREN'T BROKE... HE'D JUST OVERRODE THEM.
TELL HIM, DEAD GIRL.


I WAS THINKING ABOUT HOW ALIVE WRIGHT'S CORPSE WAS. THE DIFFERENT BACTERIA. THE DISINTEGRATING TISSUE. THE PLUCKY HAIR FOLLICLES. ALL THAT WARM, CUDDLY KIND OF STUFF. THEN I REALIZED SOMETHING.
IT WAS TALKING TO ME. THE SKIN. THE FACE. THE SMELL. EVERYTHING. I COULD READ IT.
I'M A CORPSE READER!
THE CORPSE WAS LIKE A BOOK THAT CONTAINED ALL THE INFORMATION OF THE LIFE THAT HAD LEFT IT.
I GUESS YOU COULD SAY THAT'S THE POINT OF ME.
AHEM.
SHE MANAGED TO SEE THAT WRIGHT HAD BEEN LYING TO US AT THE VERY END. THEN ALL I HAD TO DO WAS MAKE A LITTLE SENSITIVITY CHECK ON THE SPACE STATION CONTROLS.
BASED ON HOW THE HEAT FROM WRIGHT'S FINGERS HAD COOLED, I COULD REVERSE HIS KEY-STROKES AND GET CONTROL OF YOUR SHIP.
GOD BLESS YOUR LITTLE MUTANT GENES.
THOUGH MAYBE YOU DON'T WANNA BE SAVING MY LIFE.
WHEN I WAS AS GOOD AS DEAD... IT MEANT THAT YOU AND EDIE WERE IN THE CLEAR. BUT NOW I'M OUTTA THIS HOLE... IT'S GAME ON AGAIN...
WE STILL DON'T KNOW WHICH ONE OF US IS GONNA DIE.

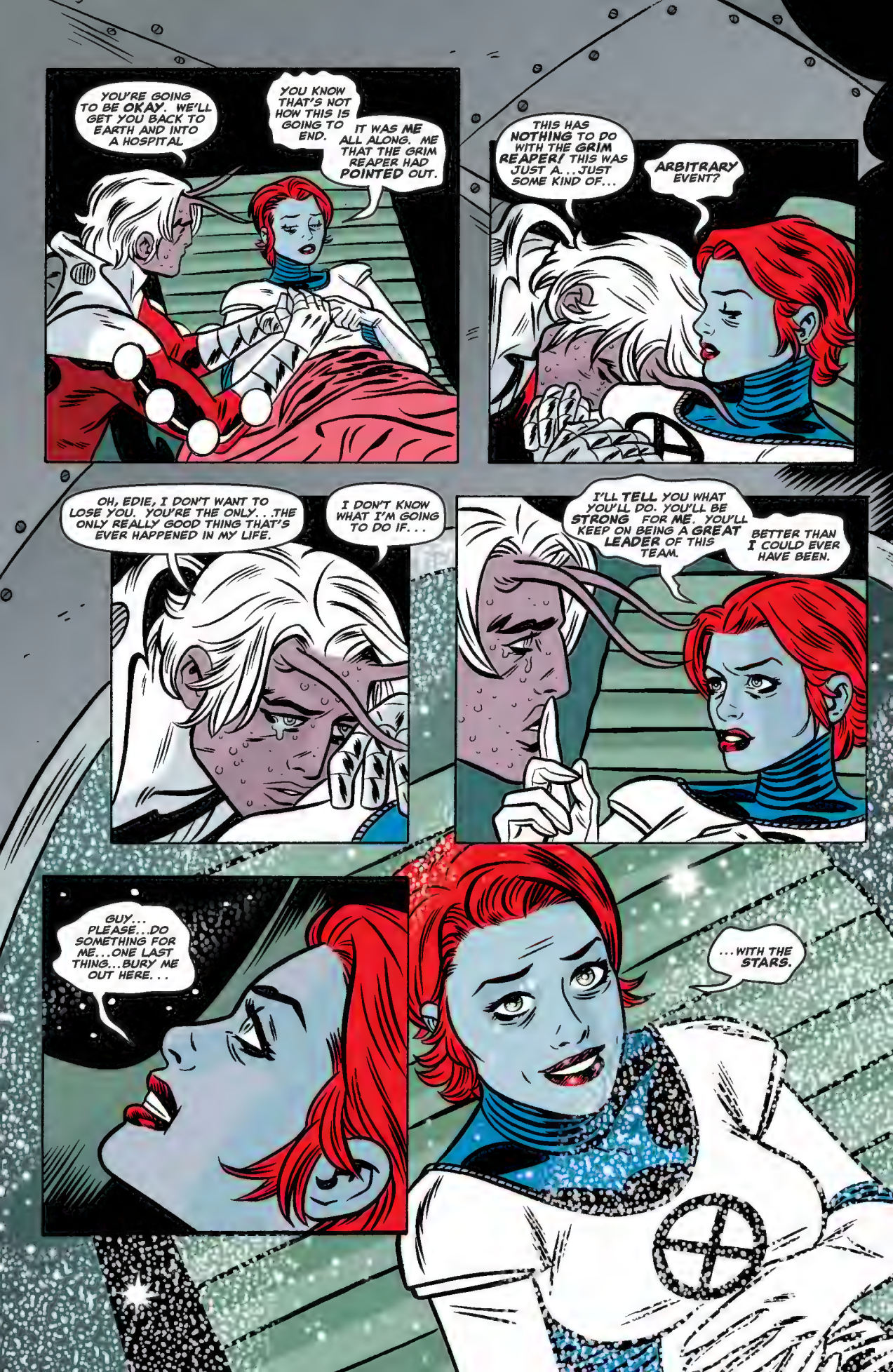
NO ONE DIES!
YIPPEE!
WE ALL LIVE! WE CREATE ORDER OUT OF THE ARBITRARY UNIVERSE. . . AND TELL THE GRIM REAPER TO GO TO HELL.
MAYBE SOMEONE DIES. . .
HUH?
MAYBE A WHOLE LOT OF PEOPLE DIE.
THE SPIKE?
SO WHO ARE. . .

JUS' WHEN I WAS STARTING TO FEEL PART OF THE TEAM.
SPIKES! DAMN!
MY OWN TRADEMARK WEAPON.
FEEL KINDA LIKE... A YOUNG SAMUEL L. JACKSON IN APOCALYPSE NOW... OR WAS IT LAURENCE FISHBURNE? YOU REMEMBER WHEN... A SPEAR...
A SPEAR...
ONE BROTHER DOWN!
SECOND BROTHER GOIN' THE SAME WAY!
AIGHIEE!

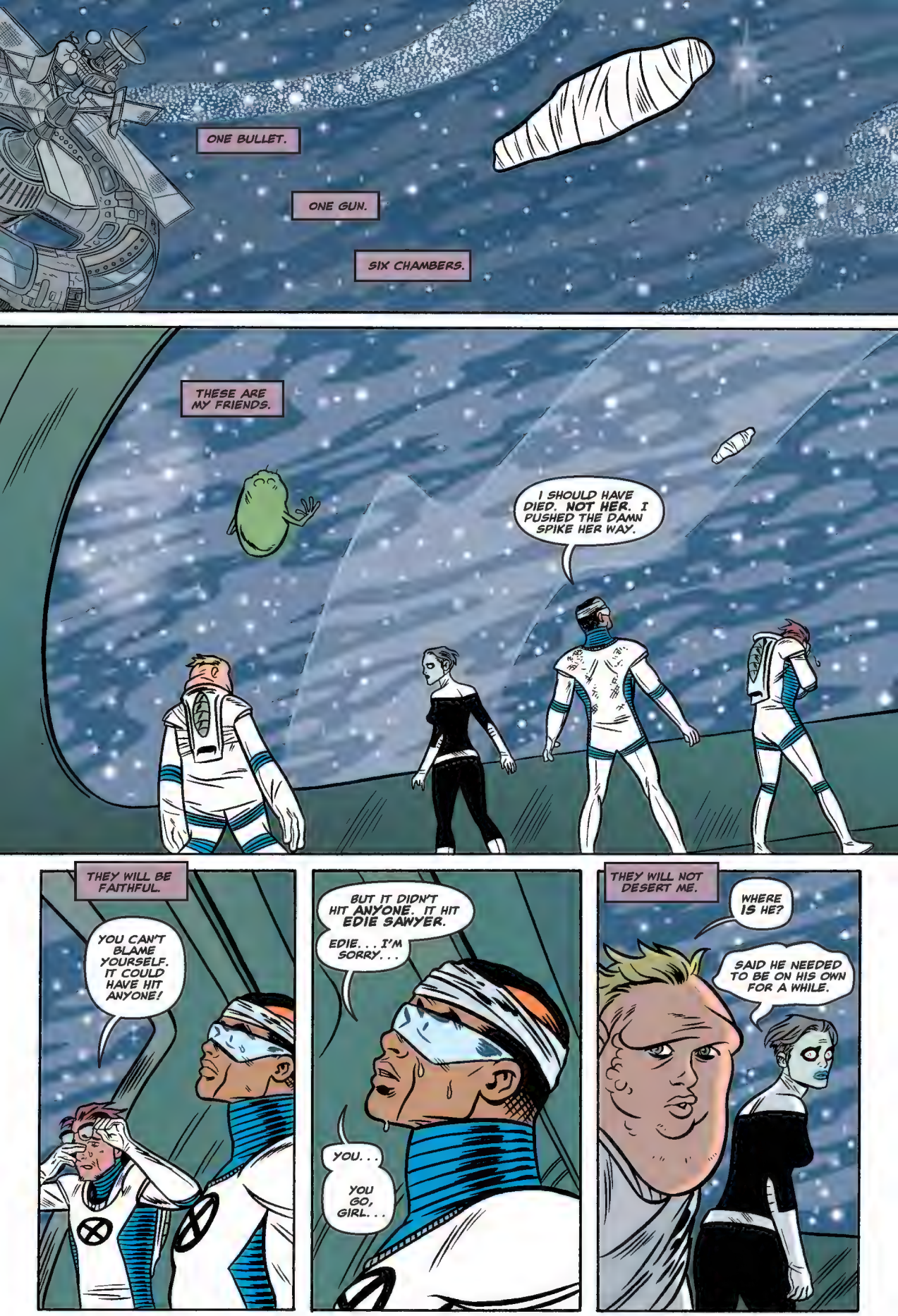

ENEMY STILL ALIVE!
I AIN'T BEEN ALIVE FOR YEARS.
TRUTH IS, I PROBABLY AIN'T EVER BEEN ALIVE.
OH MY, ANOTHER HARD-LUCK STORY.
I WAS BORN DEAD.
BUT I'LL DIE LIVING.
JEEZ, THEY LOOK SHARP!
THANKS FOR THE WARNING.

YOU'LL DIE JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE, BUSH-RANGER.
DON'T I GET TO HAVE A LAST MEAL BEFORE I'M EXECUTED?
SURE YOU DO.
MY BOOT.
"MY BOOT?" A LITTLE... B-MOVIE ACTION HERO, DON'T YOU THINK?
I THOUGHT IT WAS PRETTY COOL, CONSIDERING THE CIRCUMSTANCES.
CASUALTIES?

WE'VE LOST THE SPIKE.
GUY...
...I'M SCARED.


YOU'RE GOING TO BE OKAY. WE'LL GET YOU BACK TO EARTH AND INTO A HOSPITAL
YOU KNOW THAT'S NOT HOW THIS IS GOING TO END.
IT WAS ME ALL ALONG. ME THAT THE GRIM REAPER HAD POINTED OUT.
THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE GRIM REAPER! THIS WAS JUST A...JUST SOME KIND OF...
ARBITRARY EVENT?
OH, EDIE, I DON'T WANT TO LOSE YOU. YOU'RE THE ONLY...THE ONLY REALLY GOOD THING THAT'S EVER HAPPENED IN MY LIFE.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M GOING TO DO IF...
I'LL TELL YOU WHAT YOU'LL DO. YOU'LL BE STRONG FOR ME. YOU'LL KEEP ON BEING A GREAT LEADER OF THIS TEAM.
BETTER THAN I COULD EVER HAVE BEEN.
GUY... PLEASE...DO SOMETHING FOR ME...ONE LAST THING...BURY ME OUT HERE...
...WITH THE STARS.

NO, EDIE. NO, NO, NO.
A GRAVE BACK ON EARTH... IT'D ONLY BECOME SOME KIND OF TOURIST TRAP. THEY'LL PROBABLY END UP SELLING PLASTIC GLOWING REPLICAS OF MY GRAVESTONE IN THE X-FORCE STORES.
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DIE. DON'T GIVE UP. FIGHT.
I'VE GOT NOTHING LEFT TO FIGHT WITH, SWEETHEART. IT'S ALL GONE. IT'S EASY NOW THAT IT'S ALL GONE.
WHY ARE YOU SMILING?
BECAUSE... I'VE JUST THOUGHT OF... A GREAT NAME... A NEW NAME... FOR THE TEAM...
COME CLOSER... I THINK MY VOICE IS...
THE NEW NAME SHOULD BE... X... $#@#%$!
THAT'S GREAT, EDIE.
EDIE?


ONE BULLET.
ONE GUN.
SIX CHAMBERS.
THESE ARE MY FRIENDS.
I SHOULD HAVE DIED. NOT HER. I PUSHED THE DAMN SPIKE HER WAY.
THEY WILL BE FAITHFUL.
YOU CAN'T BLAME YOURSELF. IT COULD HAVE HIT ANYONE!
BUT IT DIDN'T HIT ANYONE. IT HIT EDIE SAWYER.
EDIE... I'M SORRY...
YOU...
YOU GO, GIRL...
THEY WILL NOT DESERT ME.
WHERE IS HE?
SAID HE NEEDED TO BE ON HIS OWN FOR A WHILE.

WHIRRR
THEY WILL JOIN ME IN MY DAILY RITUAL.
THE ONLY THING THAT MAKES SENSE OF THE HOURS AND THE PAIN.
CLICK

X-FORCE #129

"X-STATIX."

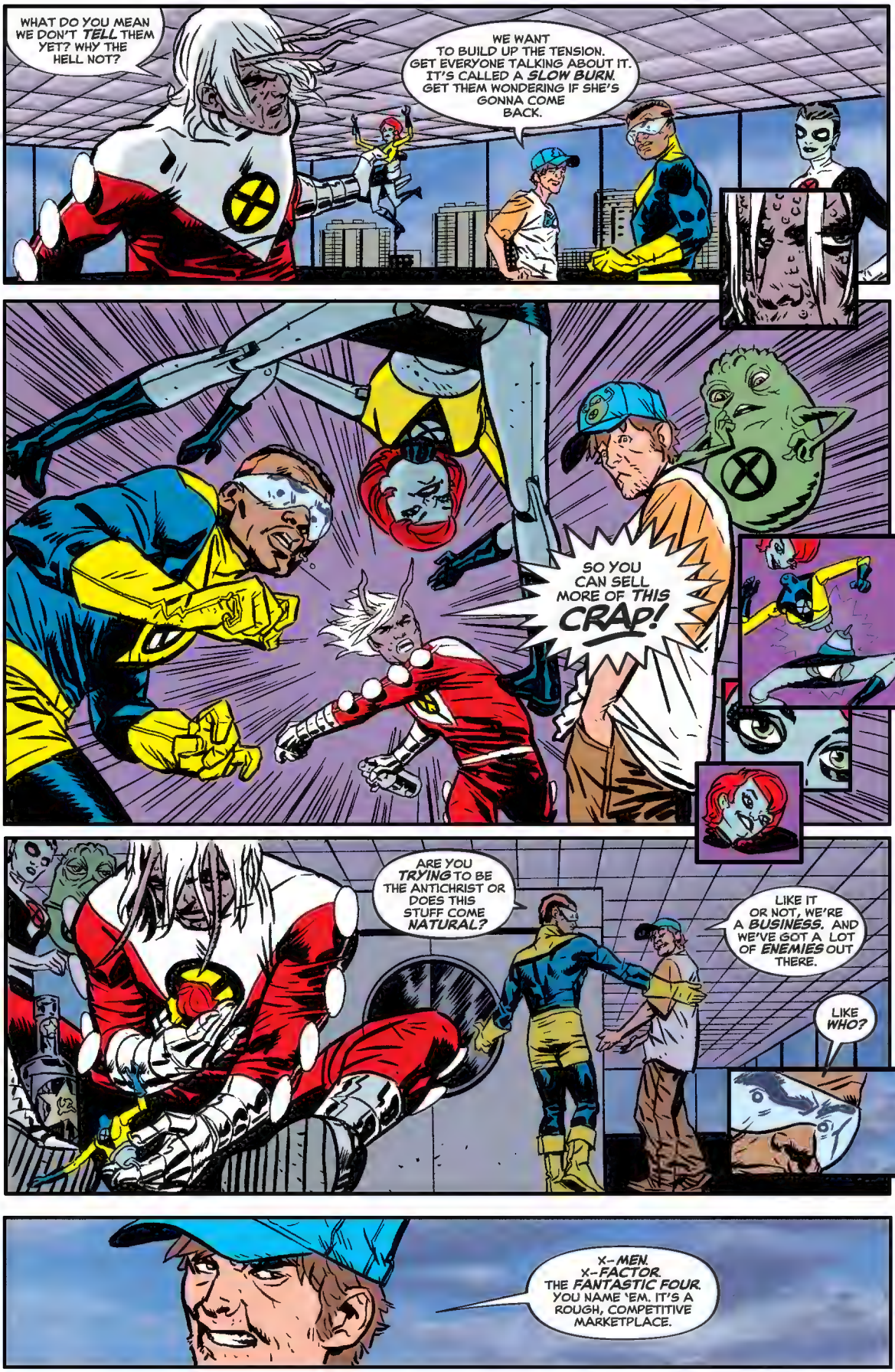
X-STATIX? WHAT KINDA MADE-UP LOUSY NAME IS THAT?
IT WAS THE LAST THING EDIE SAID TO ME. SHE SAID... 'COME CLOSER'... THEN SHE WHISPERED IT...
AND THEN...

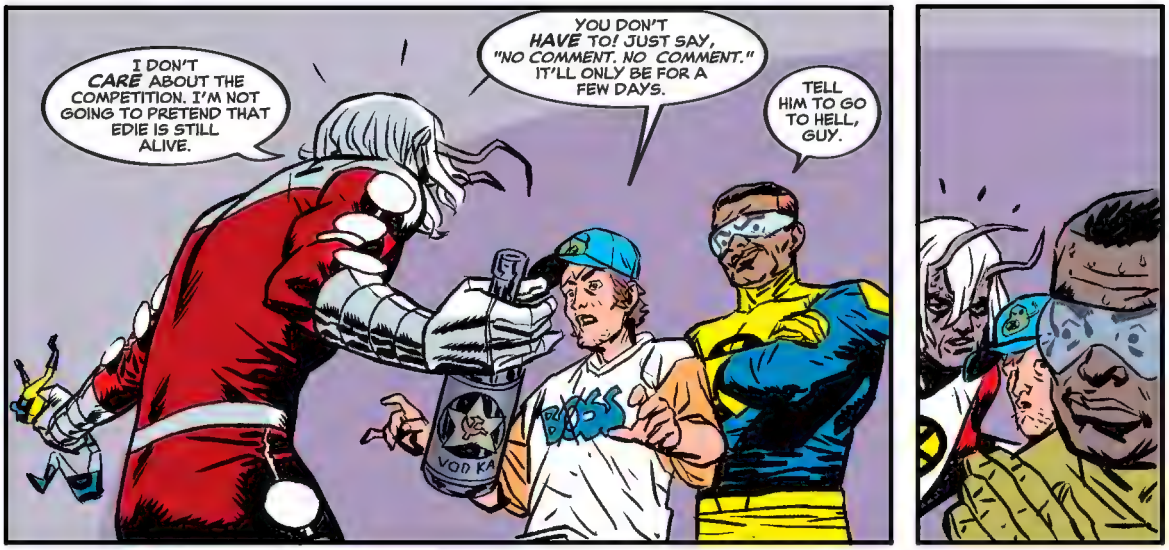
I'M REAL SORRY, GUY. I KNOW HOW TOUGH THIS IS FOR YOU AND IT'S REALLY SWELL THAT EDIE WAS THINKING ABOUT THE TEAM AT THE VERY END... BUT WE'VE ALREADY GOT A NEW NAME.

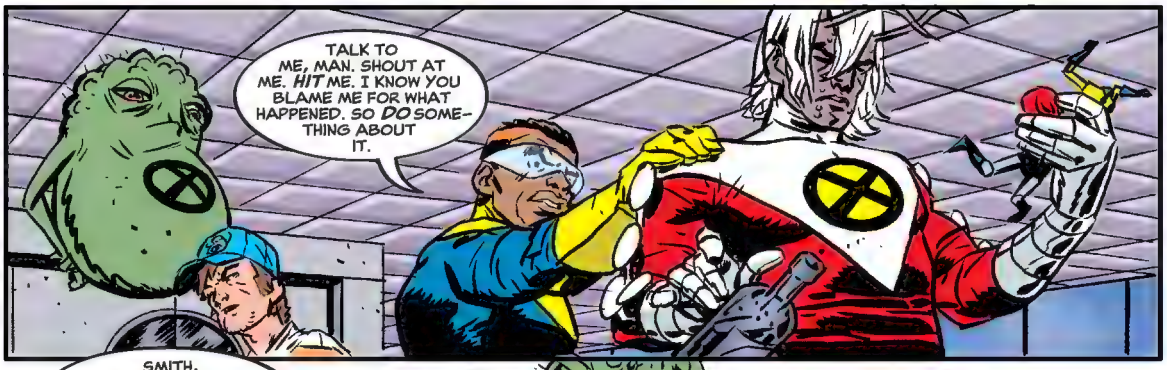
YOU KNOW HOW MUCH IT WOULD MEAN TO HIM IF WE USED HER NAME. OKAY. SO MAYBE IT'S A LITTLE WEIRD... WHO GIVES A...

... I'VE HAD SOME VERY EXPENSIVE FOCUS GROUPS LIAISING WITH A CRACK MEDIA CONSULTANCY FIRM AND THEY'VE COME UP WITH A NAME.
IT'S ALREADY BEEN PUT TO A SECRET MEETING OF OUR BIGGEST SHAREHOLDERS AND IT'S A DONE DEAL.

STAN LEE PRESENTS
X STORM!
WRITER PETER MILLIGAN
ARTIST DUNCAN FEGREDO
COLORIST LAURA ALLRED
LETTERER BLAMBOT'S NATE PIEKOS
ASST. EDITOR JOHN MIESEGAES
EDITOR AXEL ALONSO
CHIEF JOE QUESADA
PRESIDENT BILL JEMAS
Loyola
X-FORCE
THE MOOD OUTSIDE THE X-FORCE BUILDING GROWS INCREASINGLY SOMBRE AS RUMORS SPREAD OF THE DEATH OF EDIE SAWYER, ALSO KNOWN AS U-GO GIRL, PROBABLY THE MOST POPULAR OF ALL X-FORCE MEMBERS.
UNCHARACTERISTICALLY FOR THE NORMALLY MEDIA-FRIENDLY X-FORCE MACHINE, NO OFFICIAL STATEMENT HAS BEEN MADE.
IT HAS BEEN CONFIRMED THAT THE SPIKE HAS BEEN KILLED IN ACTION, THOUGH THE SPIKE HADN'T BEEN AROUND LONG ENOUGH TO CAPTURE THE AMERICAN PUBLIC'S IMAGINATION.
AN OBITUARY FOR THE SPIKE CAN BE FOUND ON WWW.X-FORCE SLASH DECEASED.
U-GO GIRL


WHAT DO YOU MEAN WE DON'T TELL THEM YET? WHY THE HELL NOT?
WE WANT TO BUILD UP THE TENSION. GET EVERYONE TALKING ABOUT IT. IT'S CALLED A SLOW BURN. GET THEM WONDERING IF SHE'S GONNA COME BACK.
SO YOU CAN SELL MORE OF THIS CRAP!
ARE YOU TRYING TO BE THE ANTICHRIST OR DOES THIS STUFF COME NATURAL?
LIKE IT OR NOT, WE'RE A BUSINESS. AND WE'VE GOT A LOT OF ENEMIES OUT THERE.
LIKE WHO?
X-MEN. X-FACTOR. THE FANTASTIC FOUR. YOU NAME 'EM. IT'S A ROUGH, COMPETITIVE MARKETPLACE.

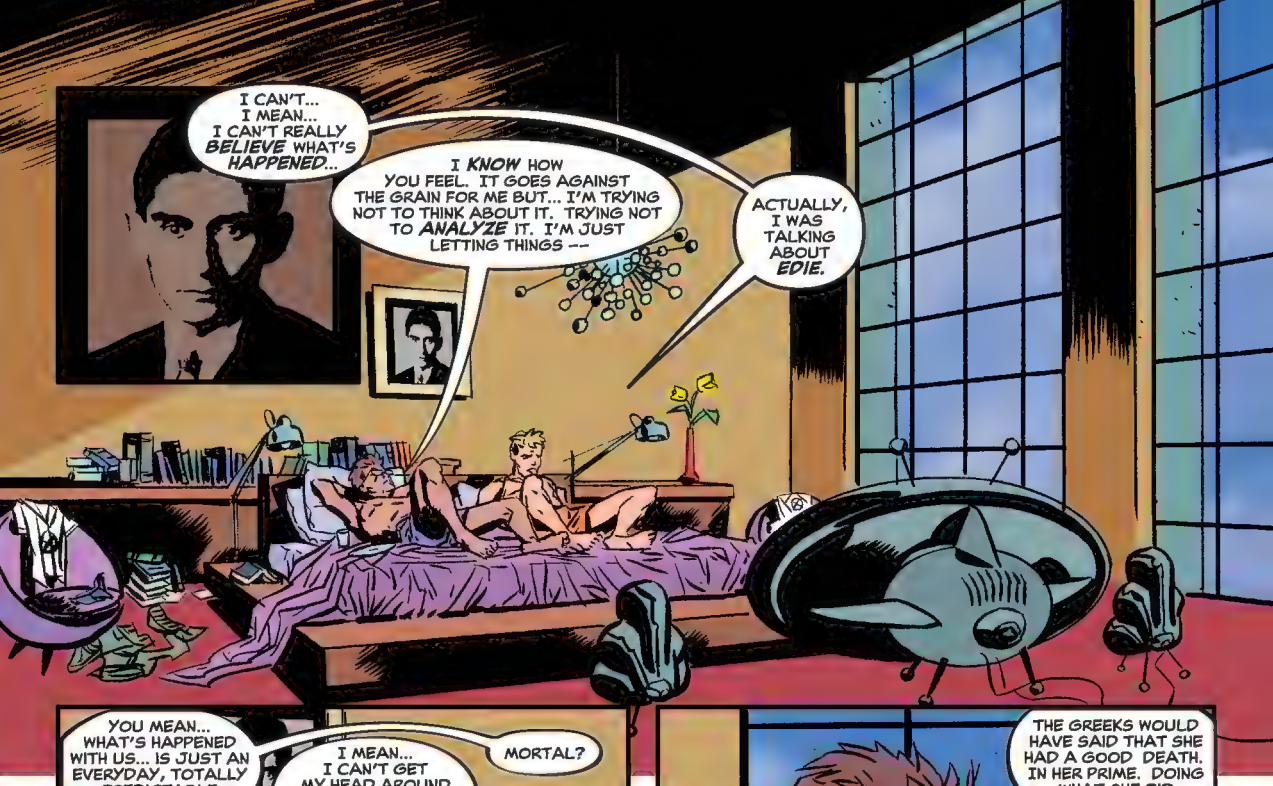


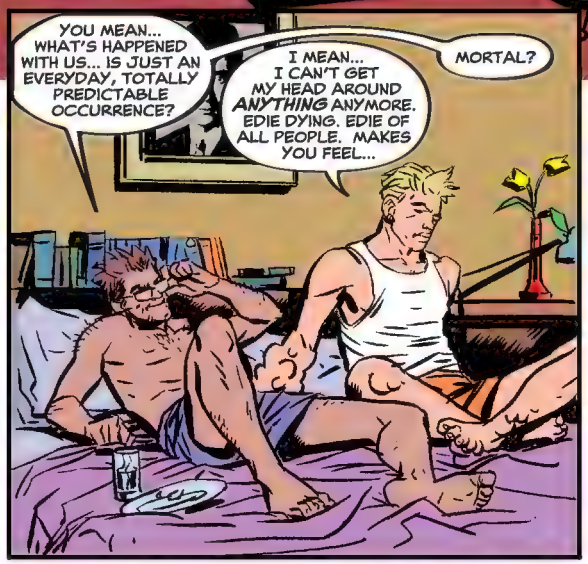


SMITH, THIS IS AN ORDER. IF THEY ASK YOU ABOUT EDIE YOU SAY NO COMMENT. IF YOU EVEN HINT AT THE TRUTH YOU'RE IN VERY DEEP %&$!?

COME ON, GUY. EDIE WOULD HAVE UNDERSTOOD.

YOU'RE SO CLOSE TO HAVING YOUR NECK BROKEN.


I CAN'T... I MEAN... I CAN'T REALLY BELIEVE WHAT'S HAPPENED...
I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL. IT GOES AGAINST THE GRAIN FOR ME BUT... I'M TRYING NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT. TRYING NOT TO ANALYZE IT. I'M JUST LETTING THINGS --
ACTUALLY, I WAS TALKING ABOUT EDIE.


YOU MEAN... WHAT'S HAPPENED WITH US... IS JUST AN EVERYDAY, TOTALLY PREDICTABLE OCCURRENCE?
I MEAN... I CAN'T GET MY HEAD AROUND ANYTHING ANYMORE. EDIE DYING. EDIE OF ALL PEOPLE. MAKES YOU FEEL...
MORTAL?

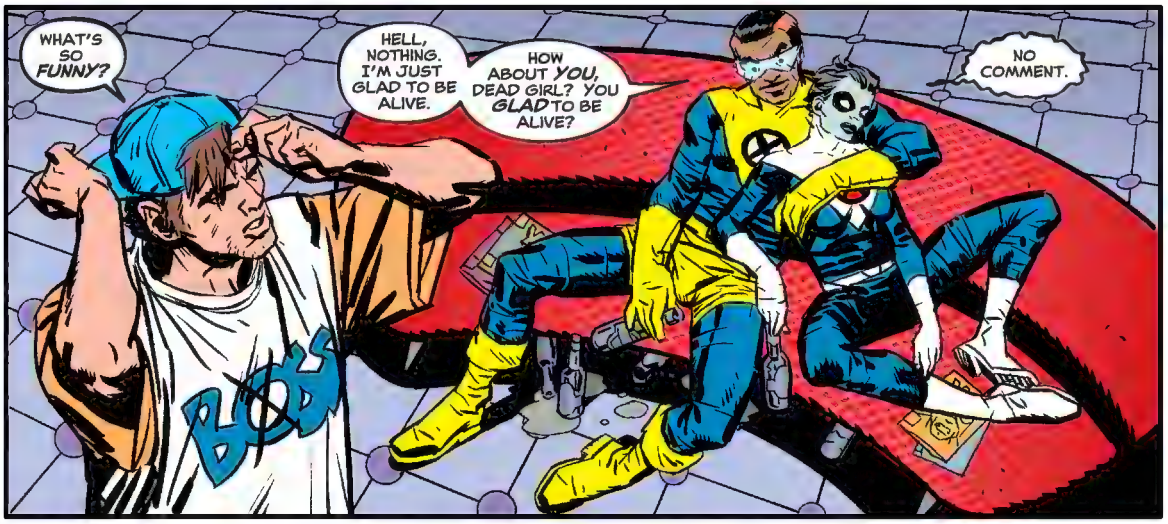
THE GREEKS WOULD HAVE SAID THAT SHE HAD A GOOD DEATH. IN HER PRIME. DOING WHAT SHE DID BEST.
IN LOVE.
BUT TOO SOON. WAY TOO SOON.

THEN WHAT'S THE ANSWER? TO CUT YOURSELF OFF FROM ALL THAT? TO CAUTERIZE YOUR HEART?
I DON'T KNOW. I'M JUST THE GUY WHO CAN DO WEIRD THINGS WITH HIS FAT. YOU'RE THE CLEVER ONE.

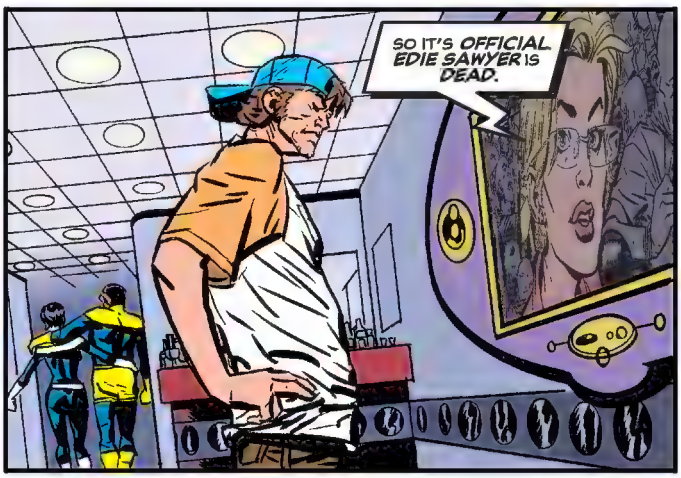
I WISH.
"GUY! GUY, CAN YOU TELL US..."
"CAN YOU GIVE US ANY NEWS ON EDIE?"

SURE, I CAN GIVE YOU SOME NEWS.
EDIE SAWYER IS DEAD.

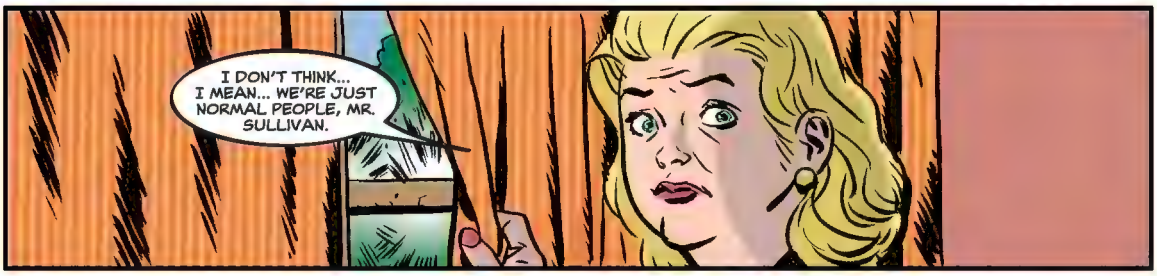
REPEAT: EDIE SAWYER IS DEAD.
YOU INSOLENT LITTLE PUP.
HAH HAH HAH


WHAT'S SO FUNNY?
HELL, NOTHING. I'M JUST GLAD TO BE ALIVE.
HOW ABOUT YOU, DEAD GIRL? YOU GLAD TO BE ALIVE?
NO COMMENT.
BOOM

FANCY... GOIN' OUT AND GETTIN' INTO TROUBLE?
NO IDEA.
WHAT DID YOU HAVE IN MIND?
SOUNDS TOO GOOD TO TURN DOWN.

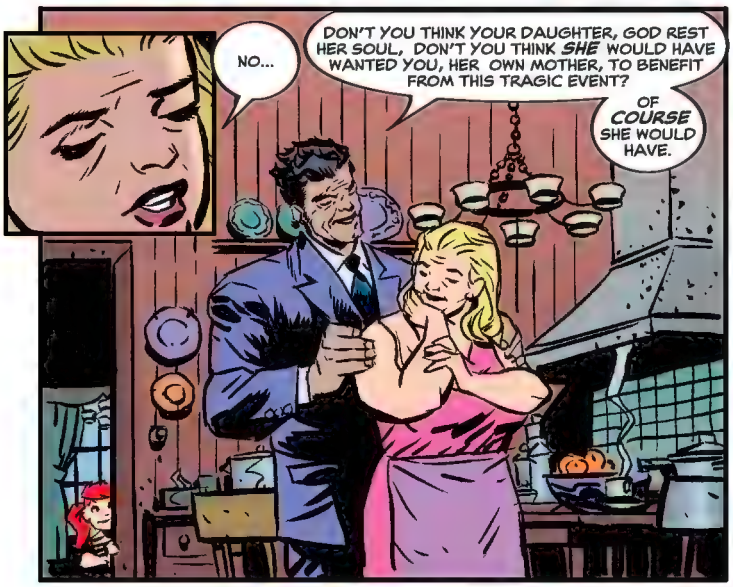

SO IT'S OFFICIAL. EDIE SAWYER IS DEAD.

MRS. SAWYER... WHEN DID YOU LEARN OF YOUR DAUGHTER'S DEATH?
HOW DO YOU FEEL?
WHEN'S THE LAST TIME YOU SPOKE TO HER?
PLEASE... I DON'T...
PLEASE, JUST...
PLEASE...
BACK OFF! GIVE THE LADY SOME ROOM! FOR GOD'S SAKE, HAVE NONE OF YOU ANY SHAME?
MRS. SAWYER HAS NOTHING TO SAY AT THE MOMENT.
SHE MAY BE GIVING SELECTIVE INTERVIEWS AT A LATER DATE WHEN SHE'S MORE COMPOSED. THESE CAN BE ARRANGED THROUGH MY OFFICE.
FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO'VE BEEN LIVING ON MARS FOR THE LAST FEW MONTHS, I'M SOLOMON O'SULLIVAN.
I'LL BE REPRESENTING MRS. SAWYER'S INTERESTS FROM NOW ON.


I DON'T THINK... I MEAN... WE'RE JUST NORMAL PEOPLE, MR. SULLIVAN.

THERE ARE NO SUCH THINGS AS NORMAL OR ABNORMAL PEOPLE! JUST PEOPLE WHO THE MEDIA ARE OR ARE NOT INTERESTED IN.
YOU ARE NOW INTERESTING. BUT WITHOUT PROFESSIONAL HELP, THEY'LL EAT YOU UP AND SPIT YOU OUT AND YOU'LL END WITH NOTHING.

I HAVE NO INTENTION OF MAKING... A PROFIT OUT OF EDIE'S DEATH.
THAT'S VERY COMMENDABLE, MRS. SAWYER, BUT DO YOU THINK X-FORCE HAS THE SAME HIGH MORAL STANDARDS?
THE HELL THEY DO! THEY'RE MAKING A MINT. AND HAVE THEY CONTACTED YOU? HAVE YOU HAD A WORD FROM THEM?


NO...
DON'T YOU THINK YOUR DAUGHTER, GOD REST HER SOUL, DON'T YOU THINK SHE WOULD HAVE WANTED YOU, HER OWN MOTHER, TO BENEFIT FROM THIS TRAGIC EVENT?
OF COURSE SHE WOULD HAVE.

I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING. I'M SOLOMON O'SULLIVAN. FIFTY PER CENT JEWISH. FIFTY PER CENT IRISH.
ONE HUNDRED PER-CENT BEHIND YOU.

"TIKE ALICAR AND THE MUTANT KNOWN AS DEAD GIRL EMERGE FROM THEIR NIGHT IN POLICE CELLS.

"POLICE SAY THAT NO CHARGES WILL BE MADE AGAINST THE X-FORCERS, BUT IT'S *RUMORED* THAT TIKE WILL MAKE A LARGE DONATION TO THE L.A.P.D BENEVOLENT FUND.

"THOUGH FREELANCE PHOTOGRAPHER ED LANCE HAS REPORTEDLY FILED A CIVIL ACTION AGAINST ALICAR FOR CRIMINAL DAMAGE AND EMOTIONAL TRAUMA.

"THIS IS X-FORCE NEWS AT..."

TIKE AND DEAD GIRL.

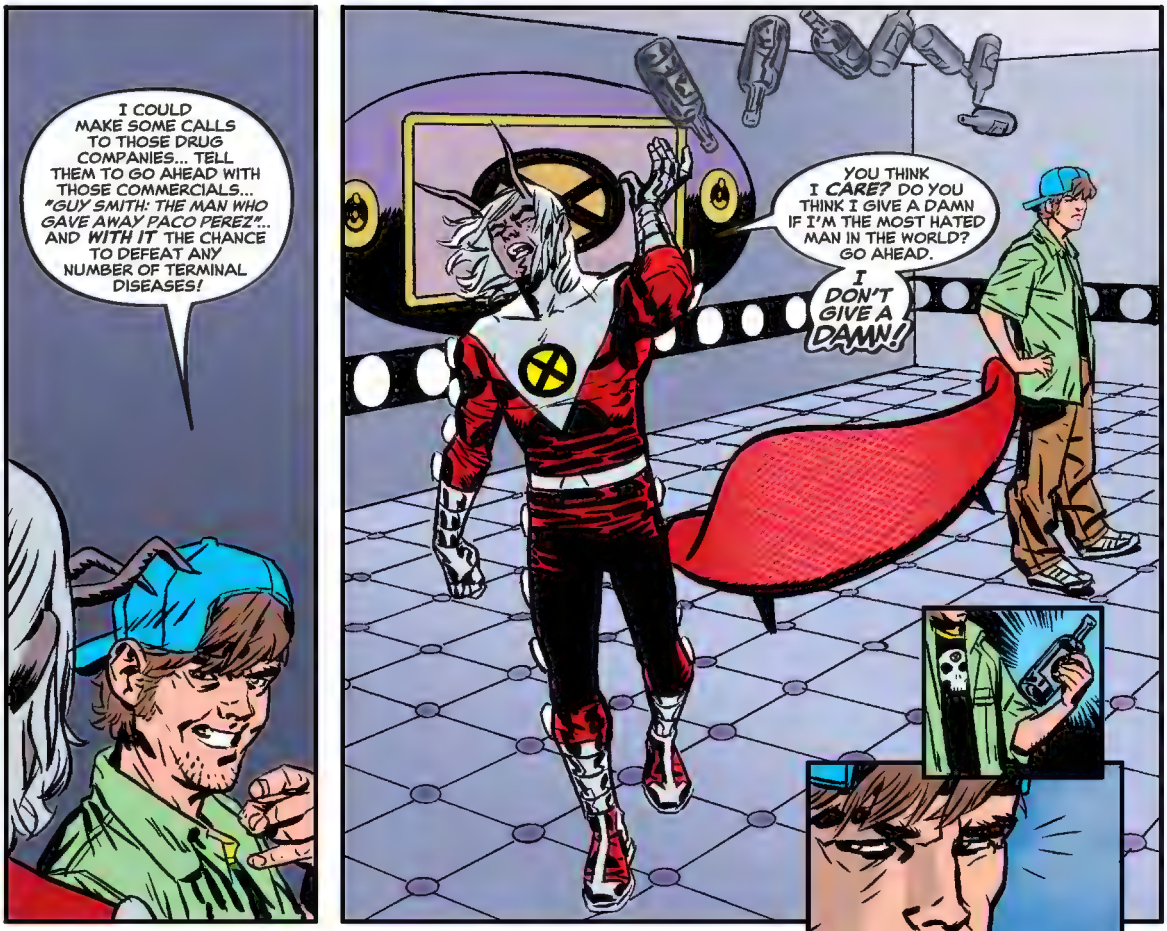
MAYBE THEY'RE MAKING A PLAY AT BEING THE NEW *GOLDEN COUPLE.*

CLAK

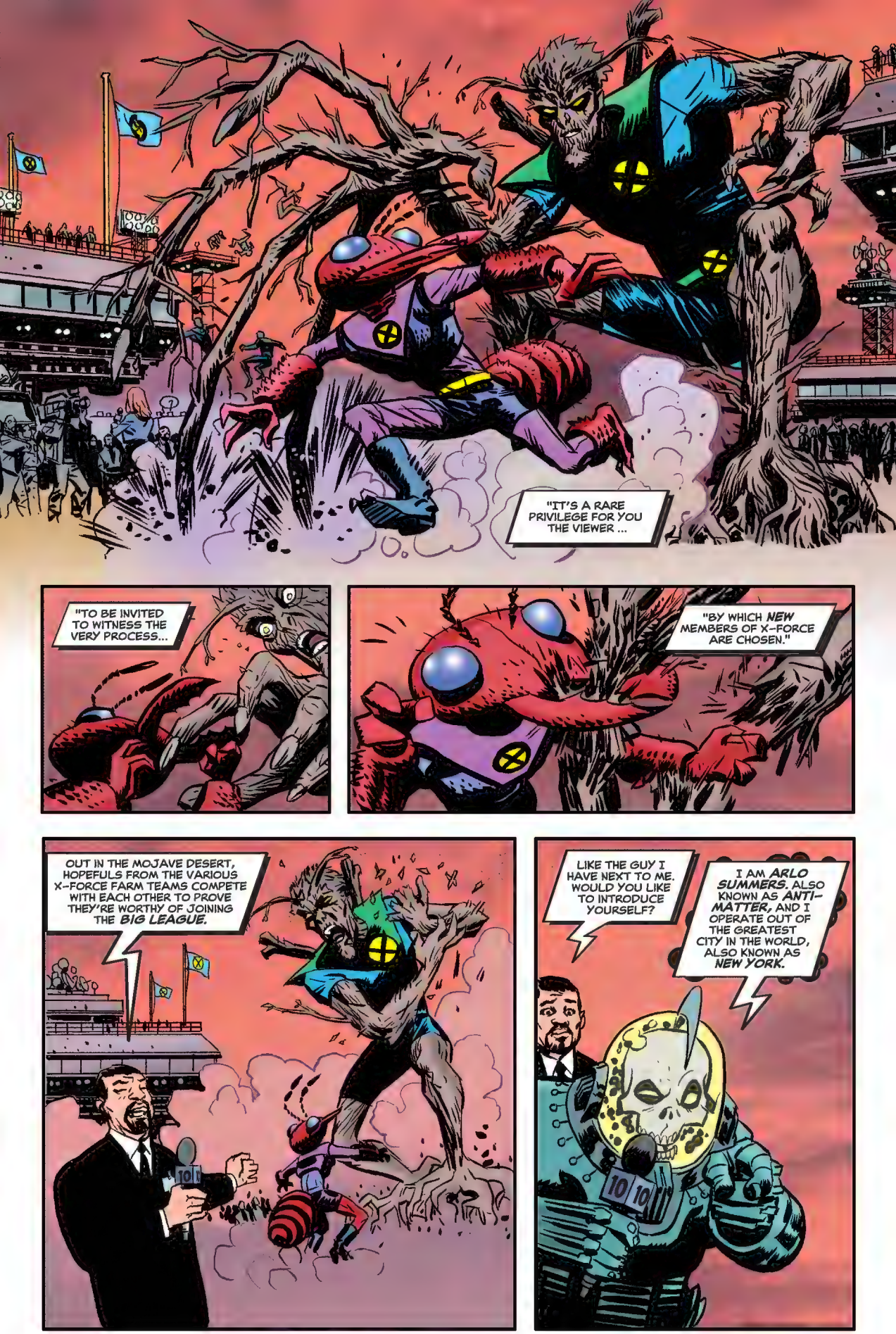
YOUR MARKETING TEAM SHOULD BE ABLE TO RUN WITH THAT.

I ASKED YOU... I *TOLD* YOU... NOT TO TELL THEM ABOUT EDIE.

AND I DID. SO WHAT'RE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT, SPIKE? FIRE ME? *FINE* ME A WEEK'S WAGES?


I COULD MAKE SOME CALLS TO THOSE DRUG COMPANIES... TELL THEM TO GO AHEAD WITH THOSE COMMERCIALS... "GUY SMITH: THE MAN WHO GAVE AWAY PACO PEREZ"... AND WITH IT THE CHANCE TO DEFEAT ANY NUMBER OF TERMINAL DISEASES!
YOU THINK I CARE? DO YOU THINK I GIVE A DAMN IF I'M THE MOST HATED MAN IN THE WORLD? GO AHEAD.
I DON'T GIVE A DAMN!

GET YOURSELF CLEANED UP BY TOMORROW. WE'RE VISITING SOME FARM TEAMS. LOOKING AT REPLACEMENTS. IT'S OPEN TO THE MEDIA. MAYBE WE CAN SALVAGE SOMETHING FROM THIS MESS.


"IT'S A RARE PRIVILEGE FOR YOU THE VIEWER ...
"TO BE INVITED TO WITNESS THE VERY PROCESS...
"BY WHICH NEW MEMBERS OF X-FORCE ARE CHOSEN."
OUT IN THE MOJAVE DESERT, HOPEFULS FROM THE VARIOUS X-FORCE FARM TEAMS COMPETE WITH EACH OTHER TO PROVE THEY'RE WORTHY OF JOINING THE BIG LEAGUE.
LIKE THE GUY I HAVE NEXT TO ME. WOULD YOU LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOURSELF?
I AM ARLO SUMMERS. ALSO KNOWN AS ANTI-MATTER, AND I OPERATE OUT OF THE GREATEST CITY IN THE WORLD, ALSO KNOWN AS NEW YORK.

WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE? DON'T WE USUALLY JUST LOOK AT THEIR REELS?
FREEMAN THINKS IT'S GOOD FOR P.R..
SHOW THE WORLD WE'RE STILL A TEAM.
JEEZ!
SPLPH!
WHO OR WHAT IN THE NAME OF EVERYTHING HOLY IS THAT?
APPARENTLY OPERATES UNDER THE NAME OF... WASH-OUT.
"A CHRONIC CHILD BED-WETTER WHO ONE FINE DAY MANAGED TO HARNESS THE POWER OF HIS NOCTURNAL OUTPOURINGS AND USE THEM AGAINST THE TYRANNICAL POLY-GAMOUS SECT IN WHICH HE WAS RAISED."

IS THAT FOR REAL?
YOU NEVER KNOW WITH THIS TEAM, DO YOU?
THIS OTHER GUY... SYCAMORE... HIS RECORD SEEMS PRETTY GOOD.

SYCAMORE?
THINK TREE. WITH BRAINS.
I HEAR HIS BARK IS WORSE THAN HIS BARK.

THAT'S PRETTY FUNNY. DON'T YOU THINK THAT'S FUNNY, GUY?
I PROBABLY WON'T SLEEP TONIGHT FOR LAUGHING.

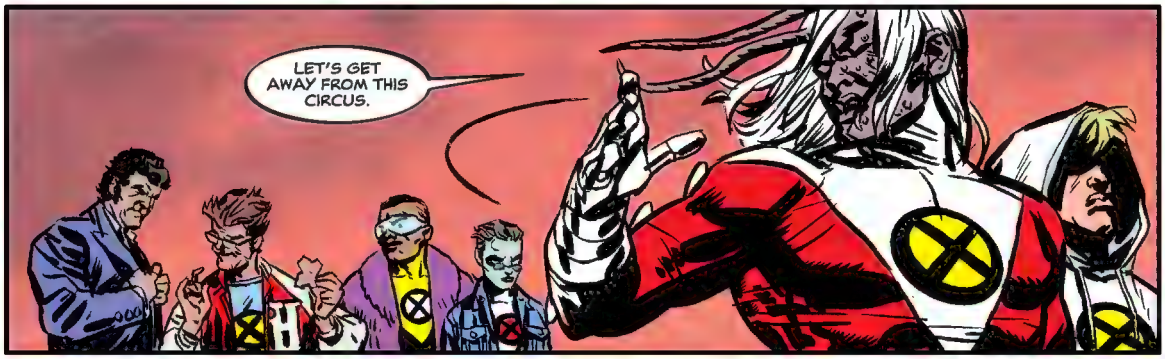
GIVE HIM TIME.

WHERE'S VENUS DEE MILO? AIN'T SHE GOT SOME KINDA TELEPORTING POWERS? AND SHE'S CUTE. LITTLE WHILE, WE'LL HARDLY KNOW EDIE AIN'T AROUND.

VENUS DEE MILO IS ON A MISSION. WE CAN CHECK OUT HER REEL LATER.
MAYBE. MAYBE YOU CAN CHECK OUT HER REEL LATER.
MY NAME'S SOLOMON O'SULLIVAN.
I'M SPECIALIZING IN MUTANTS AND RELATED MATTERS. THOUGHT YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT I NOW REPRESENT QUITE A FEW OF THE LIKELY-LADS YOU'VE BEEN WATCHING TODAY.
VENUS DEE MILO IS WITH ME, TOO.
I LOOK OUT FOR MY CLIENTS. JUS' BECAUSE YOU HAVE AN UNCANNY SUPER POWER DON'T MEAN YOU KNOW YOUR WAY AROUND A LEGAL CONTRACT.
I NEGOTIATE TERMS AND CONDITIONS. IMAGE RIGHTS. SO ON.
WE'VE ALREADY GOT AGENTS.
AGENTS WHO DON'T UNDERSTAND YOU. AGENTS WHO AIN'T GOT THE FIRST IDEA WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE... DIFFERENT.
AND YOU DO?
IT STARTED WHEN I WAS NINETEEN.

LITTLE MESSAGES. SOMETIMES JUST RANDOM WORDS. THEY PEEL OFF EVERY DAY. I SAVE THEM ALL. GOD KNOWS WHAT THEY MEAN OR WHAT THEY'LL ADD UP TO.

OCCULT SIGNS? THE GREAT JEWISH-IRISH NOVEL? I DON'T KNOW. BUT I KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE DIFFERENT.
DON'T WORRY. I'M AN AGENT. I'M *VERY* THICK-SKINNED.
YOUR FLESH PEELS OFF LIKE THAT EVERY DAY?


LET'S GET AWAY FROM THIS CIRCUS.

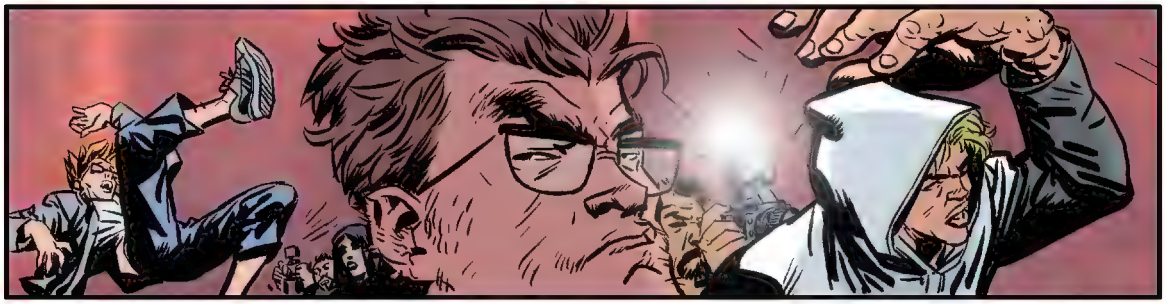
TAKE MY CARD. JUST IN CASE YOU'RE NEEDING A CHANGE OF DIRECTION.

"IS IT TRUE THAT X-FORCE'S NEW NAME IS GONNA BE X-STORM?
"DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT EDIE?
HOW EXACTLY DID SHE DIE?

BILLY-BOB... THERE'S BEEN TALK OF YOU AND MYLES BEING MORE THAN JUST FRIENDS. ANY COMMENT?

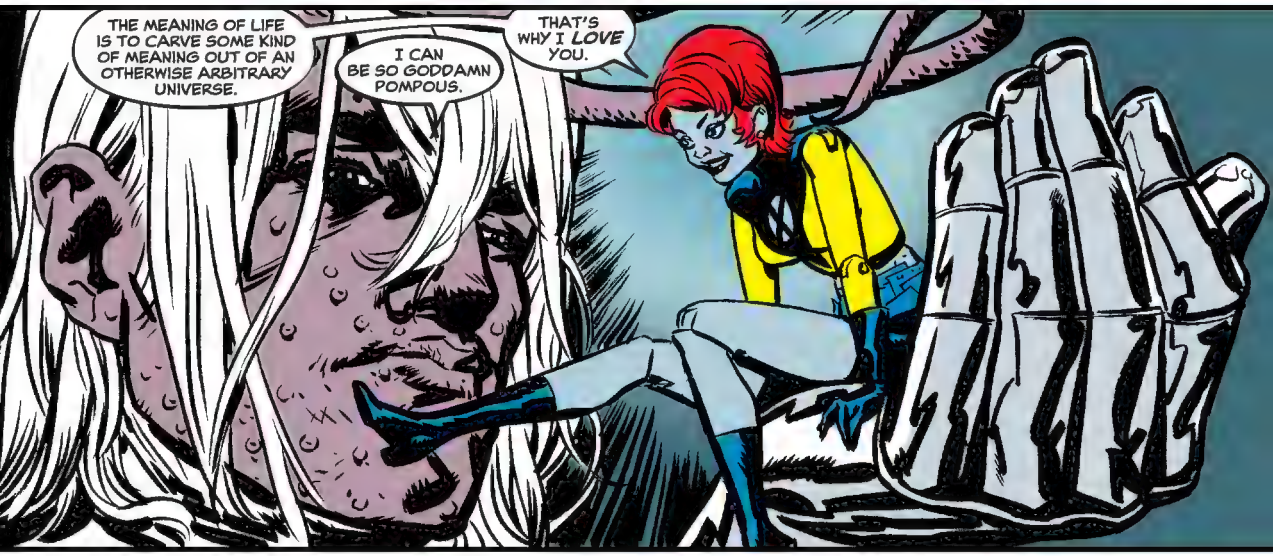
WHAT YOU IMPLYIN'?
JUST THAT... THE GAY PRESS...
THE GAY PRESS? I DON'T GIVE A DAMN 'BOUT NO GAY PRESS!

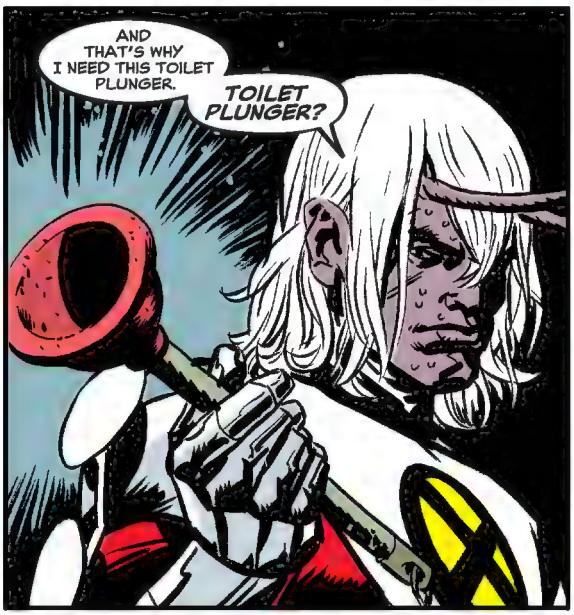
THOSE FAERIES JUS' TRYIN' TO DIS ME, MAN. IF YOU THINK I'M ONE OF THOSE, YOU SEND YOUR SISTER AROUND TO MY PLACE AND YOU'LL SOON KNOW DIF'RENT.



I KNOW YOU DON'T LIKE ME DOING IT. BUT IT HELPS. IT GIVES SHAPE TO AN OTHERWISE MEANINGLESS WORLD.
A BULLET, A REVOLVER, A SPINNING CHAMBER. MY OWN PERSONAL STATIONS OF THE CROSS.

DO YOU REMEMBER ALL THE DISCUSSIONS YOU, ME AND TIKE HAD ABOUT THE ARBITRARINESS OF LIFE?
WHAT WAS IT I SAID?


THE MEANING OF LIFE IS TO CARVE SOME KIND OF MEANING OUT OF AN OTHERWISE ARBITRARY UNIVERSE.
I CAN BE SO GODDAMN POMPOUS.
THAT'S WHY I LOVE YOU.


AND THAT'S WHY I NEED THIS TOILET PLUNGER.
TOILET PLUNGER?

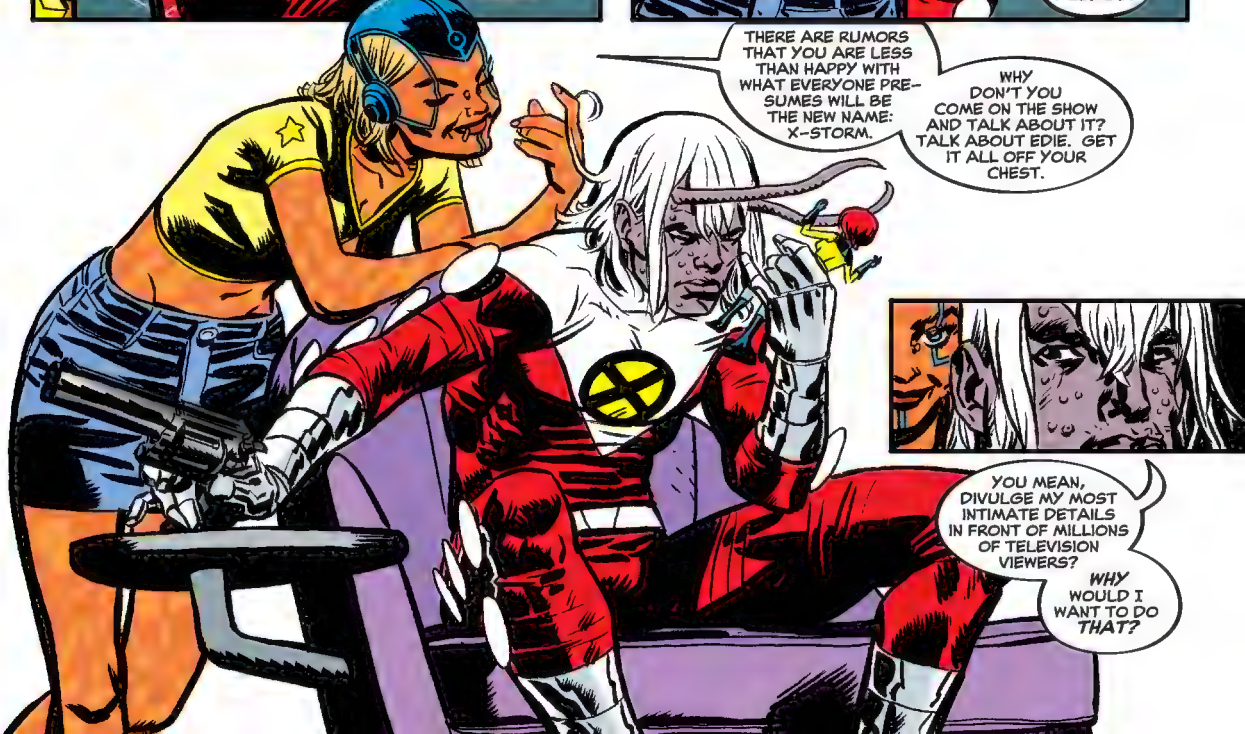
LACUNA!
LACUNA, IS THIS YOUR WORK?

I THOUGHT YOU COULD DO YOURSELF LESS HARM WITH THAT THAN WITH THIS GUN.
FUNNY, YOU NEVER STRUCK ME AS A GUN KIND OF GUY.

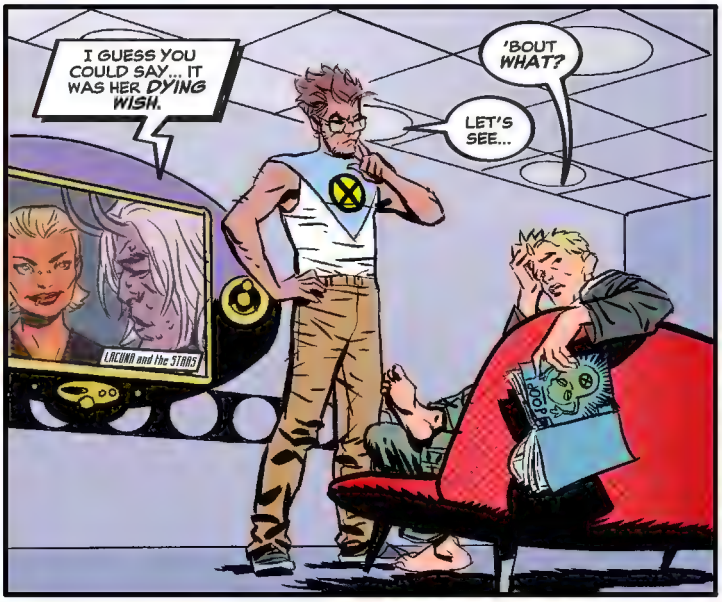
BACK OFF, LACUNA. THIS IS NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.
YOUR SHOW BUSINESS?
I'VE DECIDED TO MAKE IT MY BUSINESS.
YOU'VE GOT TO STOP WALLOWING IN SELF-PITY.

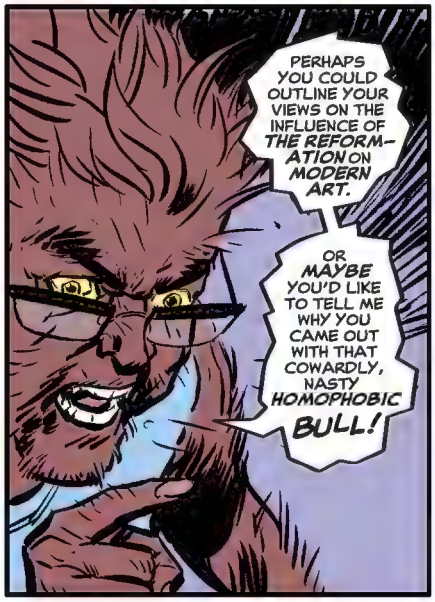
YOU'RE STILL THE LEADER OF X-FORCE. THAT STILL MEANS SOMETHING.
IT MEANT SO MUCH TO YOU, YOU TURNED DOWN THE CHANCE TO JOIN US.
BECAUSE I REALIZED I WOULDN'T MEASURE UP!

BECAUSE YOU WERE OFFERED A SHOW! WHAT'S IT CALLED? "LACUNA AND THE STARS"?
OKAY, THAT MIGHT HAVE HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT...
LEAVE ME ALONE, LACUNA. PLEASE.


THERE ARE RUMORS THAT YOU ARE LESS THAN HAPPY WITH WHAT EVERYONE PRESUMES WILL BE THE NEW NAME: X-STORM.
WHY DON'T YOU COME ON THE SHOW AND TALK ABOUT IT? TALK ABOUT EDIE. GET IT ALL OFF YOUR CHEST.
YOU MEAN, DIVULGE MY MOST INTIMATE DETAILS IN FRONT OF MILLIONS OF TELEVISION VIEWERS?
WHY WOULD I WANT TO DO THAT?

AND... THEN EDIE... SHE WHISPERED...
"X-STATIX."
AREN'T YOU GOING TO SAY SOME-THING?


I GUESS YOU COULD SAY... IT WAS HER DYING WISH.
'BOUT WHAT?
LET'S SEE...
LACUNA and the STARS


PERHAPS YOU COULD OUTLINE YOUR VIEWS ON THE INFLUENCE OF THE REFORM-ATION ON MODERN ART.
OR MAYBE YOU'D LIKE TO TELL ME WHY YOU CAME OUT WITH THAT COWARDLY, NASTY HOMOPHOBIC BULL!

I DON'T WANT... EVERY-ONE KNOWING ABOUT IT.
THAT WAS THE IDEA... WHEN WE WERE PRE-TENDING!
BUT THAT WAS THE IDEA!

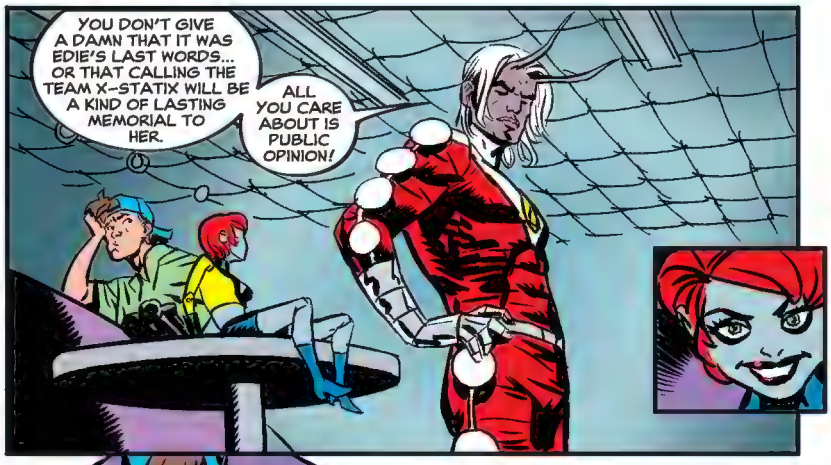
ISN'T THAT THE REASON? THAT YOU'VE NEVER DONE IT WITH A DEAD GIRL BEFORE! I WANT TO BE MORE THAN JUST NOVELTY VALUE, TIKE!
YOU ARE!
I DON'T BELIEVE YOU!

MAYBE WE ALL NEED A LITTLE HELP.

YOU'VE CHANGED YOUR MIND?
IT WASN'T A PERFORM-ANCE.
YOUR PERFORMANCE ON "LACUNA AND THE STARS" CAPTURED A NATION'S HEART.
X-FORCE

WHATEVER. WE'VE BEEN INUNDATED WITH CALLS, E-MAILS, LETTERS, DEMANDING THAT WE CALL OURSELVES X-STATIX.
HERE'S ONE FROM HIS HOLINESS THE POPE. THOUGH IT SEEMS IT WAS SENT FROM SEATTLE, WHICH SOUNDS A LITTLE IMPROBABLE.

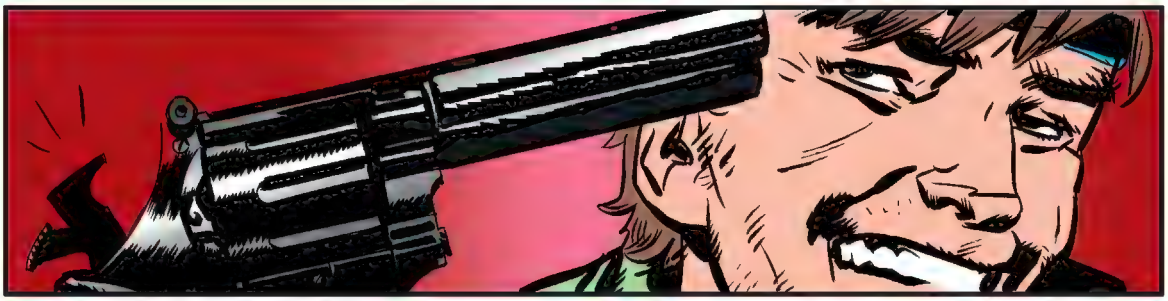
YOU'RE A SCUMBAG, FREEMAN.
WOAH! I'M GIVING YOU WHAT YOU WANTED!
FOR THE WRONG REASONS!


YOU DON'T GIVE A DAMN THAT IT WAS EDIE'S LAST WORDS... OR THAT CALLING THE TEAM X-STATIX WILL BE A KIND OF LASTING MEMORIAL TO HER.
ALL YOU CARE ABOUT IS PUBLIC OPINION!

IF I DIDN'T YOU'D CALL ME A DICTATOR!
I'M ON YOUR SIDE, GUY! I'M PART OF THIS TEAM, TOO.

PROVE IT.
TAKE MY PLACE FOR ONE DAY. THERE'S ONE BULLET IN THE CHAMBER. THAT'S A ONE-IN-SIX CHANCE.
PROVE YOU'RE ONE OF US.

SURE.



CLKK
WOW. THAT WAS A BLAST.

YOU'RE A FREAK.
YOU'RE AS BIG A FREAK AS THE REST OF US.

AND NOW I DECLARE THE DOOP KIDDIES HOSPITAL OPEN.
KIDDIES
AND FINALLY I WANT TO SAY THAT WHATEVER MAY HAVE HAPPENED... WHATEVER YOU MAY HAVE HEARD... WHOEVER WE MIGHT HAVE LOST...
WE'RE HERE TODAY TO SHOW THE WORLD THAT WE ARE STILL A TEAM.
... WE'VE GOT NO TENSIONS OR IN-FIGHTING...
...NO BAD BLOOD...
... BUT WE DO HAVE A NEW NAME.
FROM THIS MOMENT ON, THE TEAM FORMERLY KNOWN AS X-FORCE WILL BE KNOWN AS...
THE END.

MILLIGAN
ALLRED
COOKE
MARVEL COMICS
1
MARVEL
PG
$2.99
30 BIG PAGES
GIANT-SIZE
X-STATIX
SENSES-SHATTERING 1ST ISSUE!

X-STATIX #1

I MIGHT HATE THIS. AND I MIGHT HATE THEM.
LIKE, I'D JUST GOTTEN USED TO THE NEW X-FORCE.

IF WE'RE REALLY BEING HONEST HERE, AND I HOPE WE ARE, I'D STARTED TO LOVE THE NEW X-FORCE, EVEN THOUGH THEIR HIGH MORTALITY RATE DID UNSETTLE MY BOWELS.
AND NOW THEY GO AND CHANGE THE WHOLE THING.
IF THAT WAS ALL THEY'D DONE I MIGHT BE ABLE TO FORGIVE THEM.
BUT THEY HAVE DONE THE UNFORGIVABLE.
THEY'VE KILLED THE BEST OF THEM.
I MEAN, HOW DO THOSE PEOPLE EXPECT US FANS TO REACT?
I'VE GOT MORE REASON THAN MOST TO LAMENT THE PASSING OF EDIE SAWYER. SEE, THOUGH WE NEVER ACTUALLY MET, WE HAD A KIND OF RELATIONSHIP.
THIS SOUNDS A LITTLE WEIRD BUT IN MANY WAYS, EDIE WAS MY FIRST GIRL.
LET'S PUT IT THIS WAY: APART FROM MY MOTHER, SHE WAS THE FIRST GIRL TO SPEAK TO ME NICELY.
AS THOUGH SHE GAVE A DAMN ABOUT ME. AS THOUGH SHE WOULDN'T RATHER JUMP INTO A PIT OF SNAKES THAN TALK TO ME.
IT'S THE SPECTER OF DEATH!
AND IT'S POTENTIAL BY-PRODUCT OF LOVE!
X-FORCE
NEW BEGINNINGS

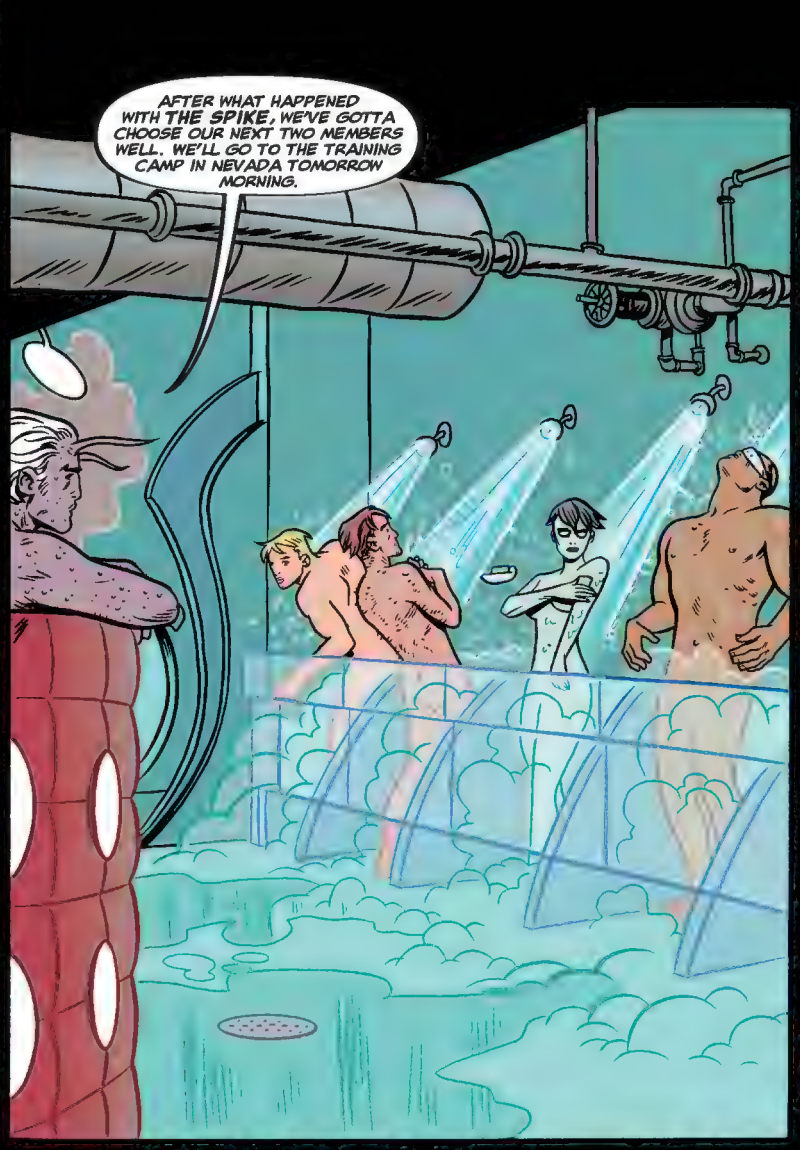
I'LL ALWAYS LOVE HER FOR THAT.
AND MAYBE I'LL ALWAYS HATE GUY SMITH AND THE REST OF HIS RELAUNCHED, NEWLY-MINTED MUTANTS FOR LETTING HER DIE.
ARNIE?
DINNER'S READY.
THIS IS MY MOTHER. I LOVE HER TOO BUT NOT HOW I LOVE EDIE.
IT'S YOUR FAVORITE.
WHAT'S THAT?
I... I FORGET.
THEN HOW DO YOU KNOW IT'S MY FAVORITE?
COME ON, YOU KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THOSE TWO KINDS OF LOVING.
IT'S FISH PIE. I'VE MADE YOU FISH PIE.
MY FAVORITE!
I'LL JUST TURN OFF THE PROJECTOR AND I'LL BE RIGHT DOWN.
WHAT... PROJECTOR?
THEN AGAIN, IN SOME UNCANNY WAY SHE AND EDIE ARE LINKED.
SEE, MY MOTHER GAVE ME LIFE...
OH. SURE. THE PROJECTOR. YOU RUN DOWN AND I'LL TURN IT OFF AND THEN WE CAN HAVE DINNER.
IT'S YOUR FAVORITE.
...AND EDIE SAWYER SAVED MY LIFE.

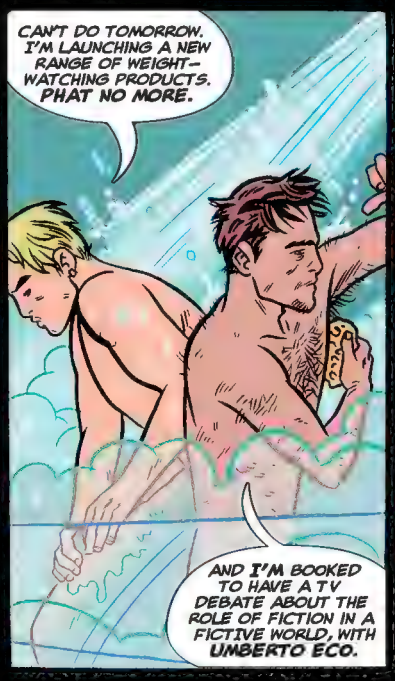
EDIE SAWYER SAVED MY LIFE.
I KNOW IT. I CAN'T FORGET IT. I CAN'T FORGET HER. I CAN'T...
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOIN', GUY? I KNOW THIS IS JUST A TV FILLER BUT YOU COULD STILL GET YOURSELF KILLED. OR IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT?
TAKE IT EASY, MAN. I'M JUST SHOWBOATING FOR THE CAMERAS.

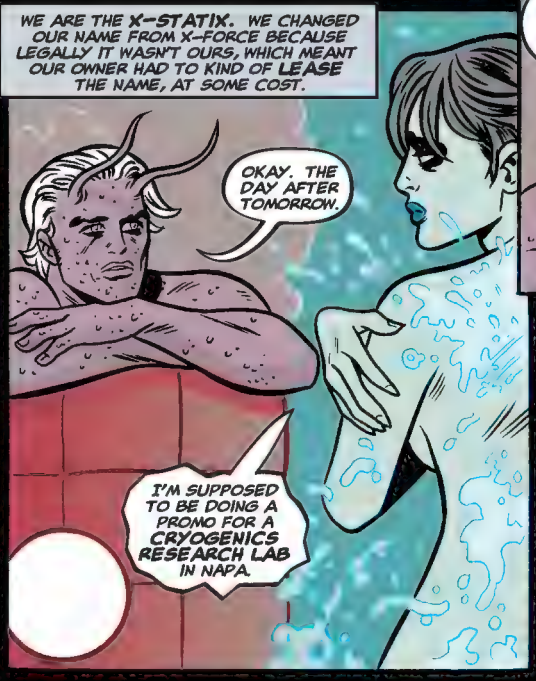
TRUTH IS. . . THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH MY HEAD. MAYBE I'M GOING MAD. BUT I CAN'T TELL TIKE ALICAR OR ANYONE ELSE ABOUT IT.
BECAUSE IF THEY KNOW I'M INSANE THEY'LL PROBABLY DROP ME, TEAM CAPTAIN OR NO TEAM CAPTAIN.
AND THIS IS ALL I HAVE LEFT NOW.
JUST WONDERING IF HOLDING A GUN TO YOUR HEAD EVERY MORNING AND PULLING THE TRIGGER AIN'T GIVIN' YOU A BIG ENOUGH KICK NO MORE.
THAT RUSSIAN ROULETTE STORY IS JUST MEDIA HYPE, TIKE. SO SHUT UP ABOUT IT. THERE'S NOTHING REMOTELY SUICIDAL OR SCREWED-UP ABOUT GUY SMITH.
NOW LET'S GO! WHATEVER'S HAPPENED, WE'RE STILL X-FORCE.
AH. . . ACTUALLY, GUY. . . WE AIN'T...

GOOD OMENS
PART ONE: GOOD SAMARITAN SLEEPS AT LIGHT
...WE AIN'T X-FORCE ANYMORE.
DID I SAY X-FORCE? I MEANT... DAMN... WHAT ARE WE CALLED NOW?
X-STATIX.
IT WAS YOU WHO WANTED THAT NAME, GUY. AND YOU STILL HAVEN'T GIVEN ME A SATISFACTORY DEFINITION OF WHAT THE WORD MEANS.
WHO CARES WHAT IT MEANS... AS LONG AS IT LOOKS GOOD.
PETER MILLIGAN writer
MICHAEL ALLRED artist
LAURA ALLRED colorist
DOC ALLRED & BLAMBOT lettering
JOHN WIESEGRAS asst. editor
AXEL ALONSO editor
JOE QUESADA editor-in-chief BILL JEMAS pres.

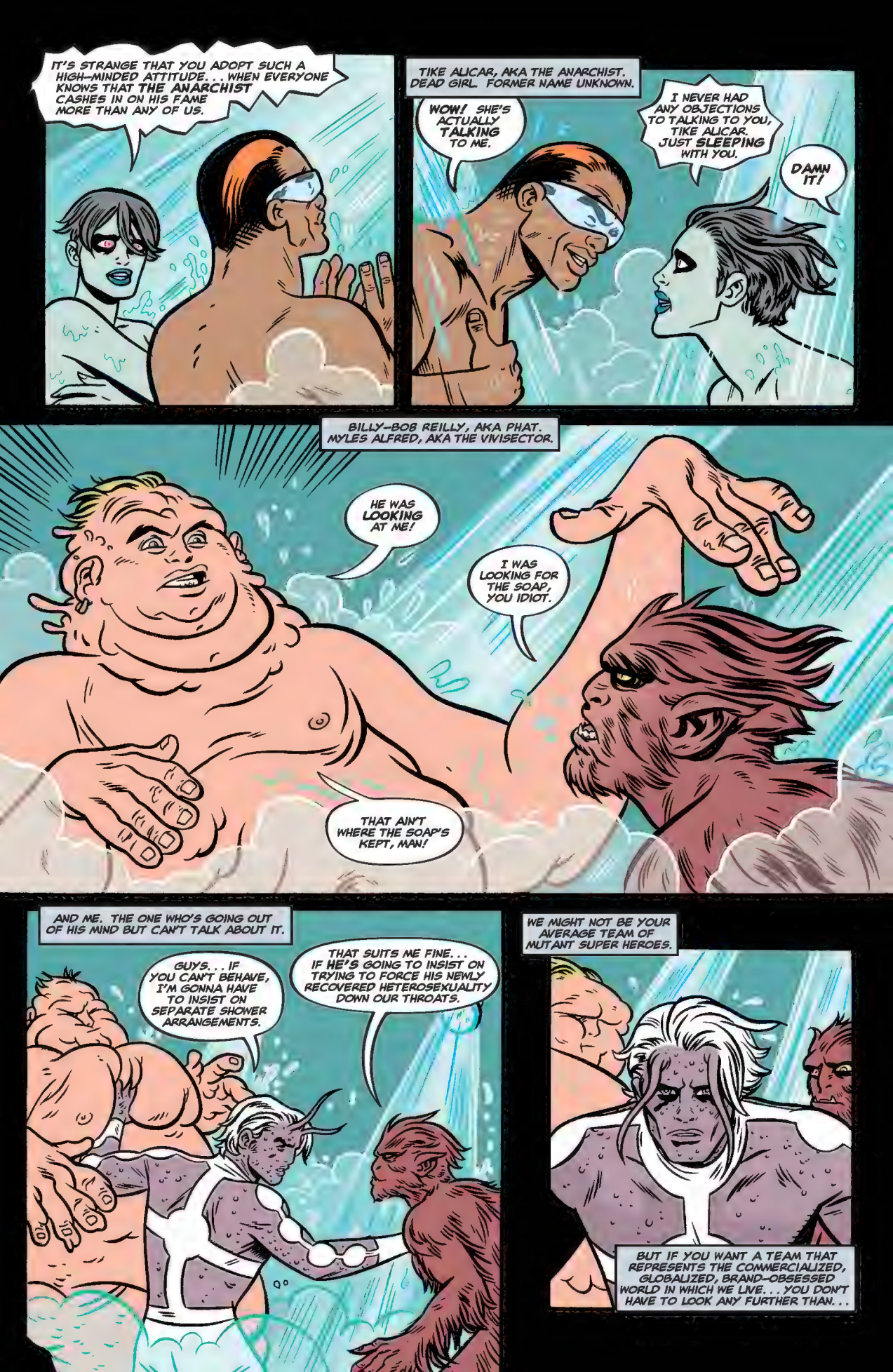
CAN'T WE JUST WATCH THEIR SHOW-REELS LIKE USUAL?
I WANT TO SEE ALL OF THE NEW RECRUITS IN THE FLESH.
FREEMAN
ONSTRUCTION
NTA MONICA DIV.


AFTER WHAT HAPPENED WITH THE SPIKE, WE'VE GOTTA CHOOSE OUR NEXT TWO MEMBERS WELL. WE'LL GO TO THE TRAINING CAMP IN NEVADA TOMORROW MORNING.


CAN'T DO TOMORROW. I'M LAUNCHING A NEW RANGE OF WEIGHT-WATCHING PRODUCTS. PHAT NO MORE.
AND I'M BOOKED TO HAVE A TV DEBATE ABOUT THE ROLE OF FICTION IN A FICTIVE WORLD, WITH UMBERTO ECO.


WE ARE THE X-STATIX. WE CHANGED OUR NAME FROM X-FORCE BECAUSE LEGALLY IT WASN'T OURS, WHICH MEANT OUR OWNER HAD TO KIND OF LEASE THE NAME, AT SOME COST.
OKAY. THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW.
I'M SUPPOSED TO BE DOING A PROMO FOR A CRYOGENICS RESEARCH LAB IN NAPA.

CRYOGENICS CAN WAIT, DEAD GIRL. BUT I CAN'T WAIT ANY LONGER TO GET THE TEAM TO FULL STRENGTH.
RIGHT... THE MERCHANDISING DEPARTMENT DON'T KNOW WHO TO PUT ON THE TRADING CARDS AND POSTERS AND ALL THE OTHER JUNK.
THINK OF ALL THE DOUGH X-STATIX INC. IS LOSING!


IT'S STRANGE THAT YOU ADOPT SUCH A HIGH-MINDED ATTITUDE... WHEN EVERYONE KNOWS THAT THE ANARCHIST CASHES IN ON HIS FAME MORE THAN ANY OF US.
TIKE ALICAR, AKA THE ANARCHIST. DEAD GIRL. FORMER NAME UNKNOWN.
WOW! SHE'S ACTUALLY TALKING TO ME.
I NEVER HAD ANY OBJECTIONS TO TALKING TO YOU, TIKE ALICAR. JUST SLEEPING WITH YOU.
DAMN IT!
BILLY-BOB REILLY, AKA PHAT. MYLES ALFRED, AKA THE VIVISECTOR.
HE WAS LOOKING AT ME!
I WAS LOOKING FOR THE SOAP, YOU IDIOT.
THAT AIN'T WHERE THE SOAP'S KEPT, MAN!
AND ME. THE ONE WHO'S GOING OUT OF HIS MIND BUT CAN'T TALK ABOUT IT.
GUYS... IF YOU CAN'T BEHAVE, I'M GONNA HAVE TO INSIST ON SEPARATE SHOWER ARRANGEMENTS.
THAT SUITS ME FINE... IF HE'S GOING TO INSIST ON TRYING TO FORCE HIS NEWLY RECOVERED HETEROSEXUALITY DOWN OUR THROATS.
WE MIGHT NOT BE YOUR AVERAGE TEAM OF MUTANT SUPER HEROES.
BUT IF YOU WANT A TEAM THAT REPRESENTS THE COMMERCIALIZED, GLOBALIZED, BRAND-OBSESSED WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE... YOU DON'T HAVE TO LOOK ANY FURTHER THAN...

O-FORCE
WELCOME TO ANOTHER EPISODE OF THE SHOW THAT'S SWEEPING AMERICA!
WHERE YOU THE VIEWER VOTE FOR THE NEWEST, FRESHEST, MOST FREEDOM-LOVING AND DEMOCRATIC SUPER HERO TEAM AROUND...
THE O-FORCE!
MY NAME IS SOLOMON O' SULLIVAN AND I WILL BE YOUR HOST TONIGHT AS ANOTHER FOUR HOPEFULS TRY TO GET YOU TO EXERCISE YOUR FRANCHISE IN THEIR DIRECTION.
AND NOW LET'S MEET TONIGHT'S MUTANTS!
OVERKILL!
ORCHID!
OPTOMAN!
OZONE!

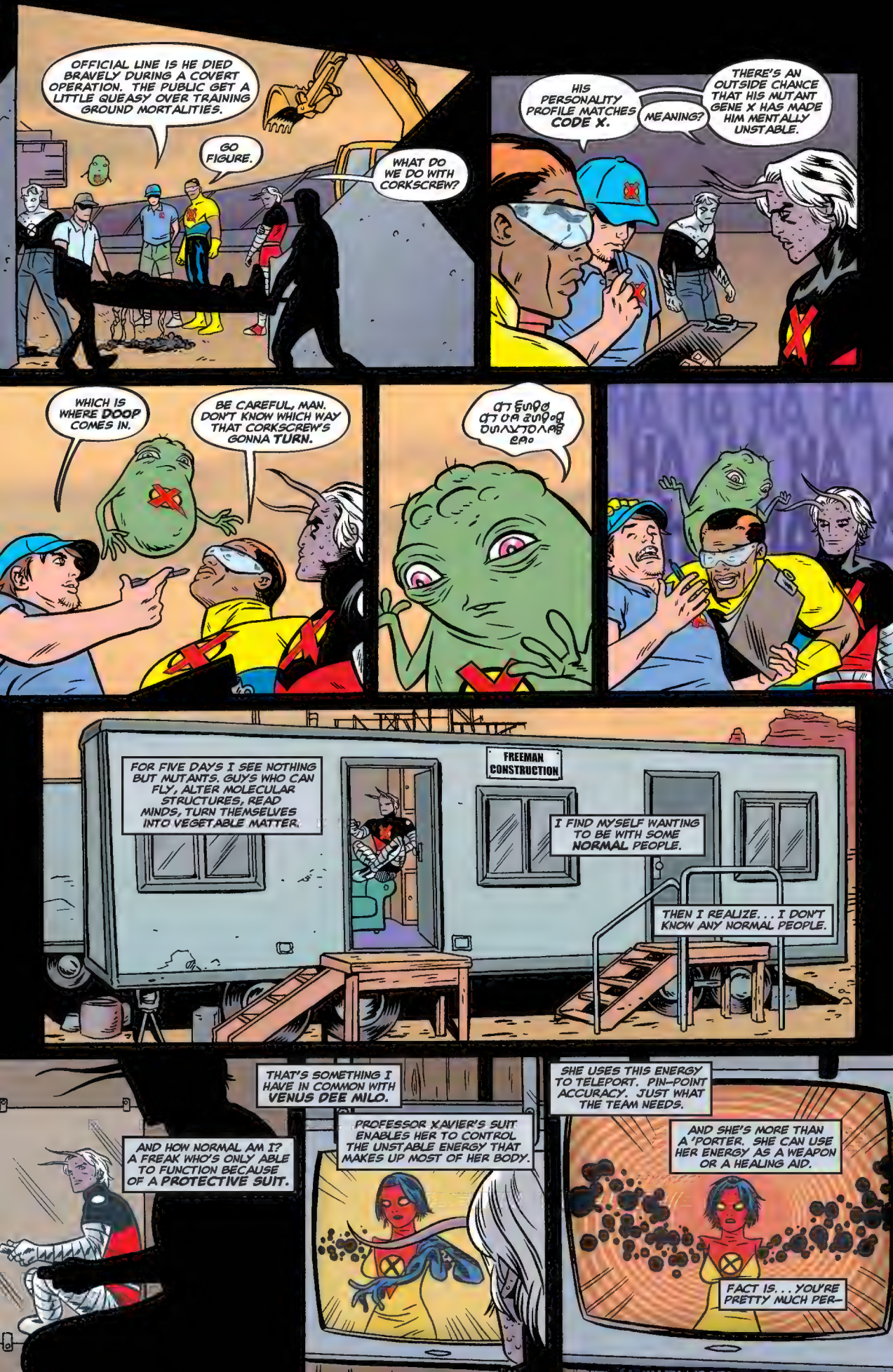
CURRENT STANDINGS.
OINK 7%
ORBIT 14%
OOZE 9%
ORIFICE 3%
OBITUARY 16%
ORACLE 8%
OCELOT 11%
OCEAN 22%
LOOK AT THOSE BOZOS! HOW CAN THEY CALL THEMSELVES A SUPER HERO TEAM!
SHOULD GET SUED FOR DEFAMATION OF CHARACTER.

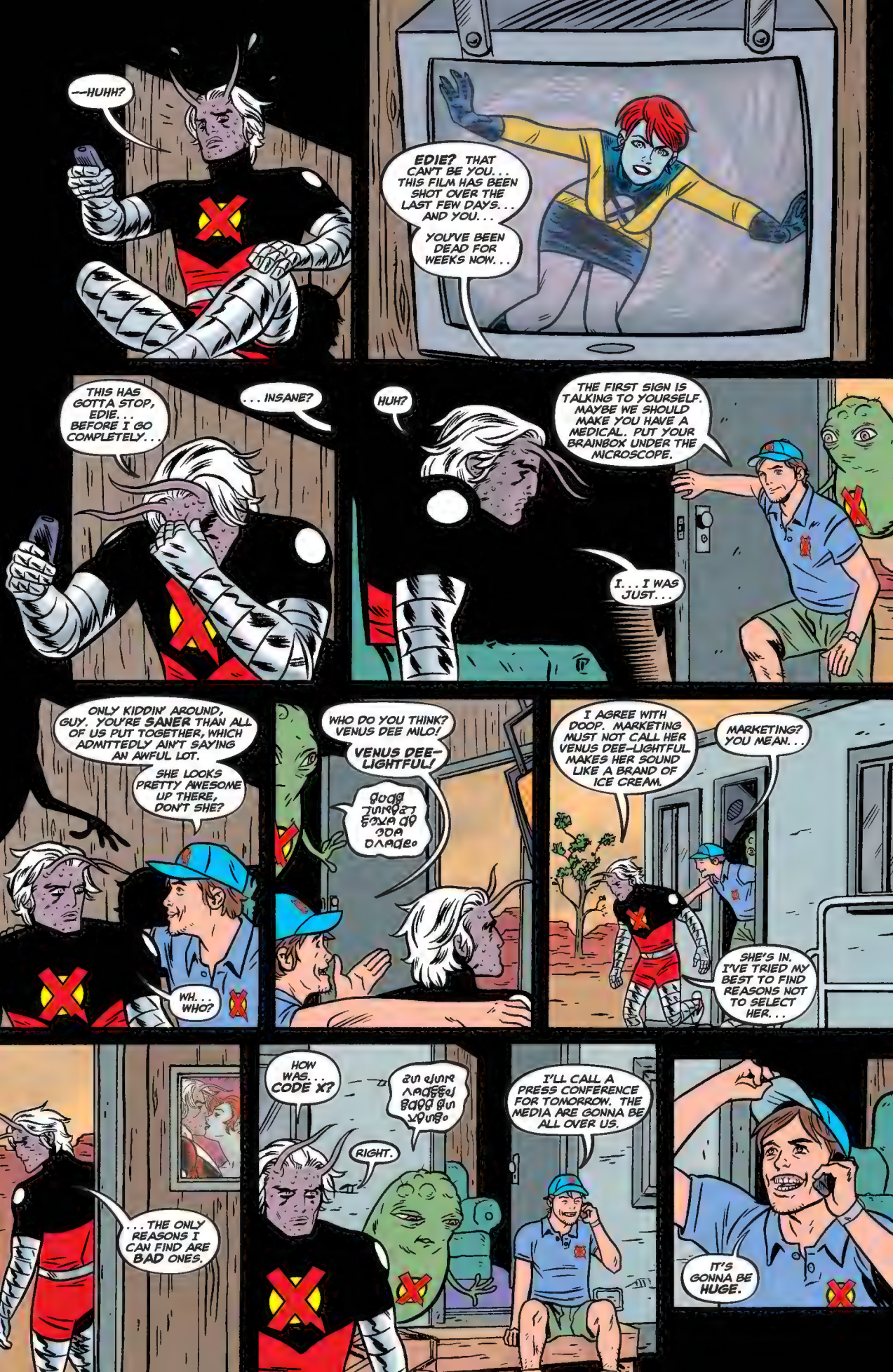
EVEN INSIDE THE SUIT CREATED FOR ME BY PROFESSOR XAVIER—WHICH HELPS ME CONTROL MY SUPER-SENSITIVITY—I CAN ALMOST TASTE THEIR SWEATY EXCITEMENT.
HOW DO THEY GET OFF ON THIS? THESE GUYS, WHO CONSTANTLY RISK DEATH AND MUTILATION FOR REAL...
...GETTING HOOKED BY A SACCHARINED IMITATION OF THEIR OWN LIVES.
THAT OPTOMAN IS A BED-WETTER. YA CAN SEE IT, MAN.
I BELIEVE HE'S LULLING THE OTHERS INTO A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY.
MY @$$.
I THOUGHT I WAS THE ONE WHO WAS LOSING HIS MIND.
THE O-FORCE. THAT'S CATCHY. JEEZ, THE LAST THING WE NEED IS MORE GOOD GUYS. SUPER-VILLAINS AND EVIL MEGALOMANIACS I CAN DEAL WITH... BUT GOOD GUYS...
DON'T THINK WE'VE GOT TOO MUCH TO WORRY ABOUT WITH THE O-FORCE, SPIKE.

MAYBE... BUT IT WOULD REALLY HELP IF YOU MADE SURE THAT VENUS DEE MILO WAS ONE OF OUR NEW RECRUITS.
WITH EDIE GONE, GOD REST HER, WE COULD DO WITH AN INJECTION OF SEX APPEAL.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
NO DISRESPECT, DEAD GIRL, BUT YOU... LET'S SAY YOU'RE... LET'S SAY WE NEED SOMEONE WITH A LITTLE MORE... MAINSTREAM APPEAL.
VENUS IS SUPPOSED TO BE A REAL BABE, GUY. WHO KNOWS... IT MIGHT HELP YOU GET OVER EDIE...
HEY, OVERKILL HAS MADE OPTOMAN CRY! KNEW THOSE FREAKY EYES HAD TO BE GOOD FOR SOMETHIN'!
THAT WOULD BE GREAT FOR PUBLICITY, WOULDN'T IT? HEART-BROKEN GUY SMITH FINDING LOVE AGAIN IN THE ARMS OF VENUS.
WELL, FORGET IT, SPIKE. I'M NOT INTERESTED. NOT IF SHE'S THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN THE WORLD...

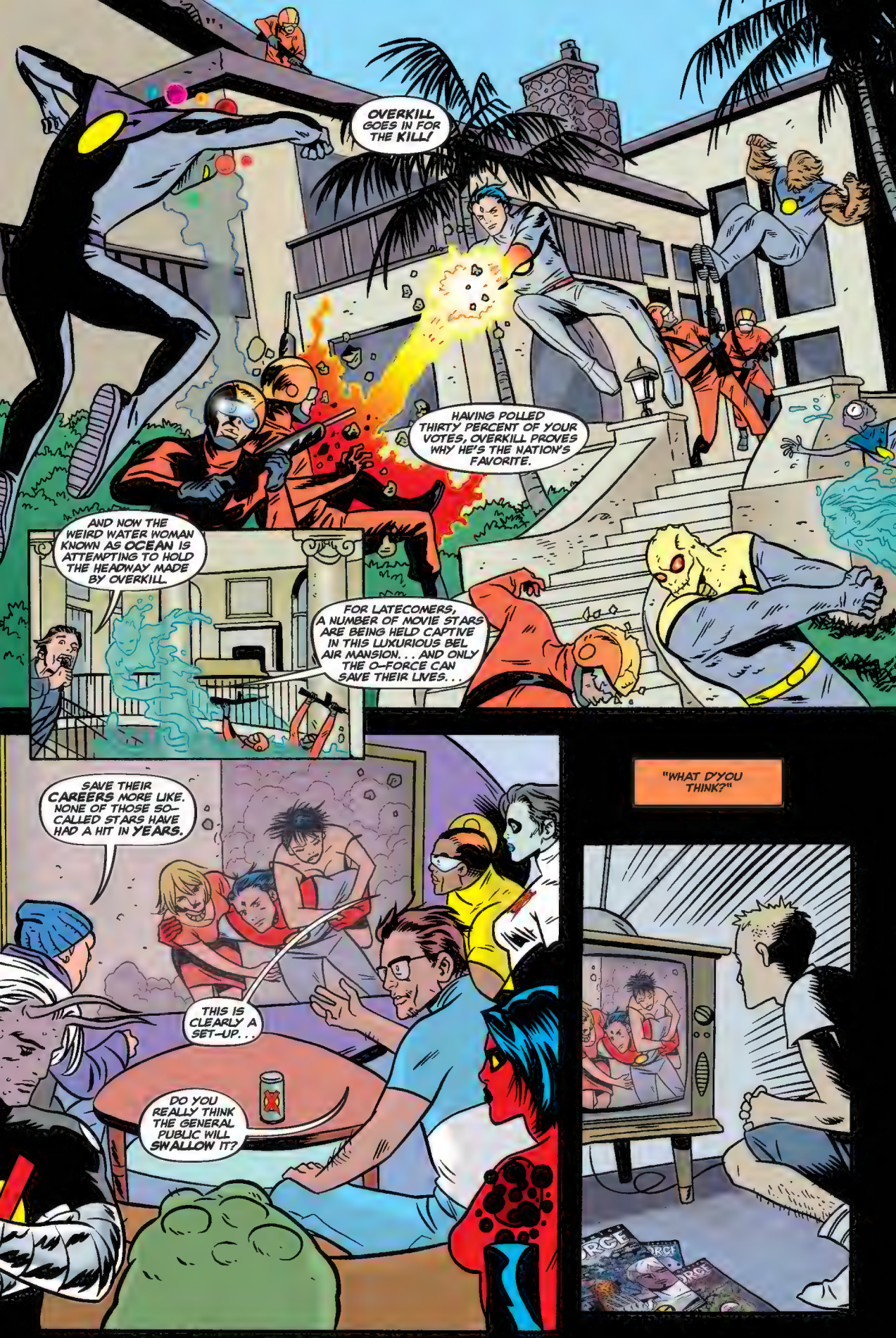
. . . WHICH SHE PROBABLY IS. . .
FREEMAN CONSTRUCTI NEVADA
HELLO, GUY. I'M VENUS DEE MILO. CAN I JUST SAY THAT. . .
HAVEN'T GOT TIME FOR PLEASANTRIES, DEE MILO. IF YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING TO SAY, SAVE IT FOR THE INTERVIEW.
AND IN CASE SPIKE FREEMAN HAS LED YOU TO BELIEVE OTHERWISE, YOUR INCLUSION IN X-FOR. . . X-STATIX IS STILL A LONG WAY FROM CERTAIN.
WHAT WAS ALL THAT ABOUT?
DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY. GUY HAS KINDA LET ALL THIS SUPERSTAR CRAP GO TO HIS SENSITIVE LITTLE HEAD.
WHEREAS GOOD OL' TIKE ALICAR. . . WELL, HE'S REMAINED A MAN OF THE PEOPLE.
C'MON. I THINK THE GAMES ARE ABOUT TO COMMENCE.

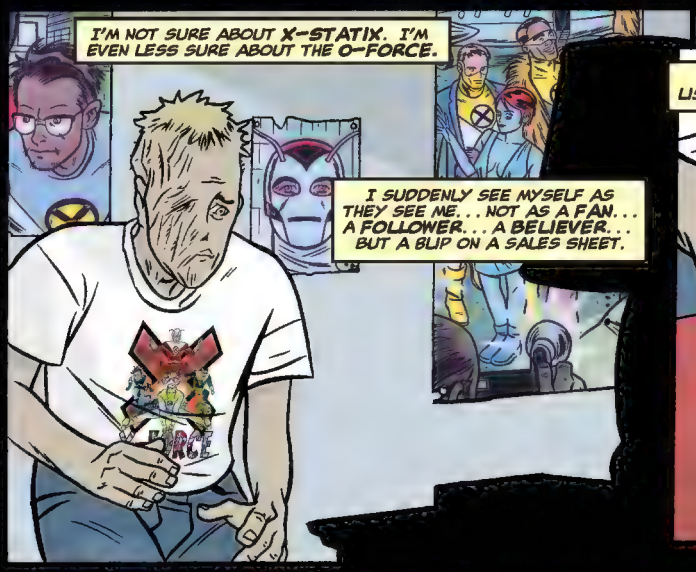
"LOOK AT THAT LITTLE SWEETIE..."
...NAME'S CORKSCREW.
YEAH. HEARD ABOUT HIM. RISING STAR OF THE FEEDER LEAGUES. REP FOR GOING IN WHERE IT HURTS.
THAT IS...WHERE IT HURTS OTHERS.
OKAY. TIME OUT! THE IDEA ISN'T TO...
...TO KILL EACH OTHER.


OFFICIAL LINE IS HE DIED BRAVELY DURING A COVERT OPERATION. THE PUBLIC GET A LITTLE QUEASY OVER TRAINING GROUND MORTALITIES.
GO FIGURE.
WHAT DO WE DO WITH CORKSCREW?
HIS PERSONALITY PROFILE MATCHES CODE X.
MEANING?
THERE'S AN OUTSIDE CHANCE THAT HIS MUTANT GENE X HAS MADE HIM MENTALLY UNSTABLE.
WHICH IS WHERE DOOP COMES IN.
BE CAREFUL, MAN. DON'T KNOW WHICH WAY THAT CORKSCREW'S GONNA TURN.
FOR FIVE DAYS I SEE NOTHING BUT MUTANTS. GUYS WHO CAN FLY, ALTER MOLECULAR STRUCTURES, READ MINDS, TURN THEMSELVES INTO VEGETABLE MATTER.
FREEMAN CONSTRUCTION
I FIND MYSELF WANTING TO BE WITH SOME NORMAL PEOPLE.
THEN I REALIZE... I DON'T KNOW ANY NORMAL PEOPLE.
AND HOW NORMAL AM I? A FREAK WHO'S ONLY ABLE TO FUNCTION BECAUSE OF A PROTECTIVE SUIT.
THAT'S SOMETHING I HAVE IN COMMON WITH VENUS DEE MILO.
PROFESSOR X.AVIER'S SUIT ENABLES HER TO CONTROL THE UNSTABLE ENERGY THAT MAKES UP MOST OF HER BODY.
SHE USES THIS ENERGY TO TELEPORT. PIN-POINT ACCURACY. JUST WHAT THE TEAM NEEDS.
AND SHE'S MORE THAN A 'PORTER. SHE CAN USE HER ENERGY AS A WEAPON OR A HEALING AID.
FACT IS... YOU'RE PRETTY MUCH PER-

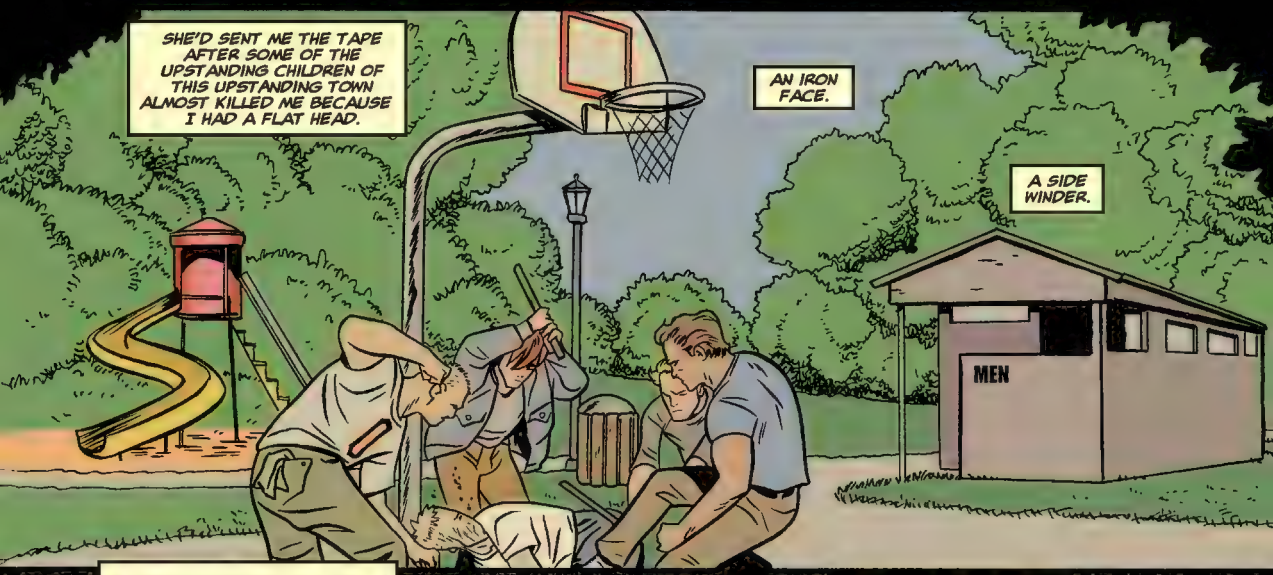

—HUHH?
EDIE? THAT CAN'T BE YOU... THIS FILM HAS BEEN SHOT OVER THE LAST FEW DAYS... AND YOU...
YOU'VE BEEN DEAD FOR WEEKS NOW...
THIS HAS GOTTA STOP, EDIE... BEFORE I GO COMPLETELY...
...INSANE?
HUH?
THE FIRST SIGN IS TALKING TO YOURSELF. MAYBE WE SHOULD MAKE YOU HAVE A MEDICAL. PUT YOUR BRAINBOX UNDER THE MICROSCOPE.
I... I WAS JUST...
ONLY KIDDIN' AROUND, GUY. YOU'RE SANER THAN ALL OF US PUT TOGETHER, WHICH ADMITTEDLY AIN'T SAYING AN AWFUL LOT.
SHE LOOKS PRETTY AWESOME UP THERE, DON'T SHE?
WH... WHO?
WHO DO YOU THINK? VENUS DEE MILO!
VENUS DEE-LIGHTFUL!
I AGREE WITH DOOP. MARKETING MUST NOT CALL HER VENUS DEE-LIGHTFUL. MAKES HER SOUND LIKE A BRAND OF ICE CREAM.
MARKETING? YOU MEAN...
SHE'S IN. I'VE TRIED MY BEST TO FIND REASONS NOT TO SELECT HER...
...THE ONLY REASONS I CAN FIND ARE BAD ONES.
HOW WAS... CODE X?
RIGHT.
I'LL CALL A PRESS CONFERENCE FOR TOMORROW. THE MEDIA ARE GONNA BE ALL OVER US.
IT'S GONNA BE HUGE.

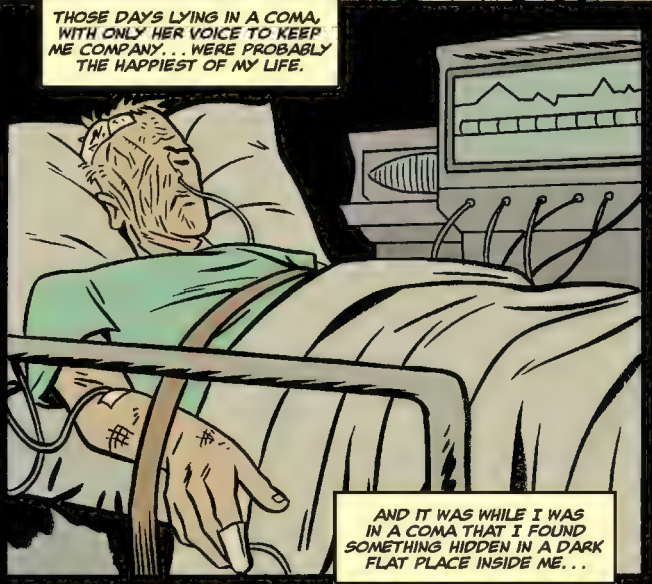
THE X-STATIX WELCOME VENUS!
WHERE THE HELL IS EVERYONE?
THE O-FORCE HAVE ALL BEEN ELECTED. . .AND THERE'S LIVE COVERAGE OF THEIR FIRST REAL-LIFE MISSION.
A BUNCH OF MOVIE STARS HAVE BEEN KIDNAPPED BY TERRORISTS. . . THE O-FORCE HAVE BEEN CALLED IN TO HELP.
I'M SAM GELLER FROM X-FAN WEEKLY. I WONDER IF I COULD ASK VENUS A FEW QUESTIONS. . .
NO YOU CANNOT. THIS PRESS CONFERENCE IS CANCELLED.
WHERE ARE YOU GUYS GOING?
WHERE DO YOU THINK, MAN?
TO FIND A TELEVISION.


OVERKILL GOES IN FOR THE KILL!
HAVING POLLED THIRTY PERCENT OF YOUR VOTES, OVERKILL PROVES WHY HE'S THE NATION'S FAVORITE.
AND NOW THE WEIRD WATER WOMAN KNOWN AS OCEAN IS ATTEMPTING TO HOLD THE HEADWAY MADE BY OVERKILL.
FOR LATECOMERS, A NUMBER OF MOVIE STARS ARE BEING HELD CAPTIVE IN THIS LUXURIOUS BEL AIR MANSION. . . AND ONLY THE O-FORCE CAN SAVE THEIR LIVES. . .
SAVE THEIR CAREERS MORE LIKE. NONE OF THOSE SO-CALLED STARS HAVE HAD A HIT IN YEARS.
THIS IS CLEARLY A SET-UP. . .
DO YOU REALLY THINK THE GENERAL PUBLIC WILL SWALLOW IT?
"WHAT D'YOU THINK?"


I'M NOT SURE ABOUT X-STATIX. I'M EVEN LESS SURE ABOUT THE O-FORCE.
I SUDDENLY SEE MYSELF AS THEY SEE ME... NOT AS A FAN... A FOLLOWER... A BELIEVER... BUT A BLIP ON A SALES SHEET.

TO CALM MYSELF, I LISTEN TO EDIE'S VOICE...
HI, THIS IS EDIE SAWYER. AND THIS IS A PERSONAL MESSAGE TO A VERY SPECIAL PERSON.
ARNIE...


SHE'D SENT ME THE TAPE AFTER SOME OF THE UPSTANDING CHILDREN OF THIS UPSTANDING TOWN ALMOST KILLED ME BECAUSE I HAD A FLAT HEAD.
AN IRON FACE.
A SIDE WINDER.
MEN


THOSE DAYS LYING IN A COMA, WITH ONLY HER VOICE TO KEEP ME COMPANY... WERE PROBABLY THE HAPPIEST OF MY LIFE.
AND IT WAS WHILE I WAS IN A COMA THAT I FOUND SOMETHING HIDDEN IN A DARK FLAT PLACE INSIDE ME...

BUT THAT WAS THEN. TODAY, I HAD TO KILL MR. MULLEN, FOR TRYING TO TALK TO A TOURIST.
THIS TOWN MADE MY LIFE HELL.
NOW I'M MAKING THIS TOWN HELL.

I KEEP SEEING HER. MORE THAN JUST IMAGINATION. IT'S LIKE... SOMEONE'S BEAMING THE IMAGES INTO MY BRAIN.
I HEAR HER VOICE TOO. THING IS... SHE DOESN'T CALL ME BY MY PROPER NAME. SHE SAYS SHE'S SENDING A MESSAGE TO A VERY SPECIAL PERSON...
ARNIE. WHO THE HELL IS ARNIE?
WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME THIS?
BECAUSE THERE'S STILL TIME FOR YOU TO WALK AWAY. I'M GOING INSANE, THE REST OF THE TEAM ARE FALLING APART. YOU'RE... YOU'RE TOO BEAUTIFUL AND... AND PURE TO BE PART OF THIS.
THAT ISN'T THE REASON YOU DON'T WANT ME IN X-STATIX.
VENUS, WHERE...
SHUT UP.

THIS USED TO BE MY GRANDPARENTS' HOUSE. WHEN I WAS ELEVEN, MY MOM AND DAD BROUGHT ME AND MY TWO BROTHERS DOWN HERE TO VISIT.

AND I KILLED THEM ALL.

YOU...
I DON'T BELIEVE YOU.

WHY NOT? I'M TOO BEAUTIFUL AND PURE TO DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT? I GOT ANGRY. I WANTED TO GO OUT AND PLAY INSTEAD OF EATING DINNER...
AND IT HAPPENED. I FELT MY SKIN START TO BURN. I WAS ON FIRE. I SCREAMED. THE ENERGY POURED OUT OF ME.

AND WHEN I STOPPED SCREAMING I WAS ALONE.
I'D OBLITERATED MY ENTIRE FAMILY.

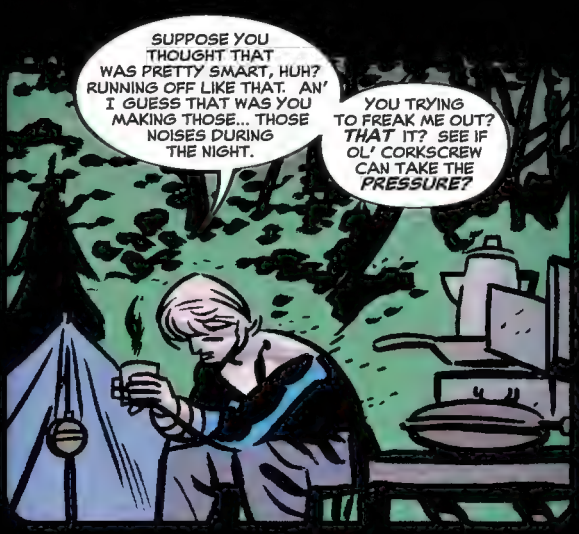
I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WOULD HAVE DONE IF PROFESSOR XAVIER HADN'T FOUND ME AND DESIGNED THIS SUIT FOR ME. IT'S MY BODY NOW. AS SENSITIVE AS SKIN.
VENUS... WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME THIS?
BECAUSE THERE WAS A LOT OF TALK THAT YOU DIDN'T WANT ME ON THE TEAM. AND I KNOW WHY.
YOU DON'T WANT ME TAKING EDIE SAWYER'S PLACE.
YOU COULDN'T FIND A REASON NOT TO CHOOSE ME. SO I'M GIVING YOU THAT REASON. I'M GIVING YOU PLENTY OF REASONS.
EIGHT YEARS OF THERAPY. FOUR SUICIDE ATTEMPTS. MANIC DEPRESSION. SELF-LOATHING. UNABLE TO SLEEP WITHOUT DRUGS THAT KEEP THE NIGHTMARES AWAY.
I DON'T WANT TO TAKE EDIE'S PLACE. SO IF YOU DON'T WANT ME ON THE TEAM... YOU GOT YOUR REASONS NOW.
YOU'VE GIVEN ME ALL THE REASONS I NEED...
TO ASK YOU TO JOIN US.
YOU'LL FIT IN JUST FINE.

STAN LEE PRESENTS,

CODE X

PETER MILLIGAN: WRITER DARWYN COOKE: ARTIST
LAURA ALLRED: COLORS BLAMBOT'S PIEKOS: LETTERS
AXEL ALONSO: EDITOR JOHN MIESEGAES: ASST. EDITOR
JOE QUESADA: CHIEF BILL JEMAS: PREZ

DAMN THAT LITTLE GREEN MONSTER!
DOOP! HEY, DOOP!
WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU?
CAN YOU BELIEVE THIS? WOKE UP AND HE'S GONE. MADE ME FOLLOW HIM INTO THE MIDDLE OF THIS DAMN PLACE AND THEN UPS AND LEAVES ME!
OR MAYBE HE'S BEEN DRAGGED AWAY BY A BEAR. RECKON THERE MUST BE BEARS OUT HERE.
THEY SHOULD HAVE LET ME HAVE A COMPASS AND A MAP AT LEAST. I MEAN, CORKSCREW AIN'T SCARED OF BEARS -- GRIZZLY, BROWN OR PURPLE.
BUT HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO FIND MY WAY OUTTA THIS PLACE WHEN I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE I AM?
HOLD ON. THINK I HEARD SOMETHING.
MAYBE HE'S COMING BACK!
HEY DOOP! THAT YOU? WHERE THE HELL YOU BEEN, BOY? SCARED ME HALFWAYS TO...
JEEZ!


SUPPOSE YOU THOUGHT THAT WAS PRETTY SMART, HUH? RUNNING OFF LIKE THAT. AN' I GUESS THAT WAS YOU MAKING THOSE... THOSE NOISES DURING THE NIGHT.
YOU TRYING TO FREAK ME OUT? THAT IT? SEE IF OL' CORKSCREW CAN TAKE THE PRESSURE?

CAN YOU STOP POINTING THAT DAMNED THING AT ME ALL THE TIME?
SEE HOW YOU LIKE IT.

LET ME TELL YOU, IT TAKES A LOT MORE THAN A FEW STUPID NOISES IN THE DARK TO NEEDLE CORKSCREW.
WHY DON'T YOU SPEAK, ANYHOW? EVEN THAT GODDAMN SCREECH YOU CALL A LANGUAGE WOULD BE BETTER THAN NOTHING.

HELL WITH THIS. I AIN'T PUTTING UP WITH IT NO LONGER. MAYBE I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO. MAYBE THAT'S THE THING.

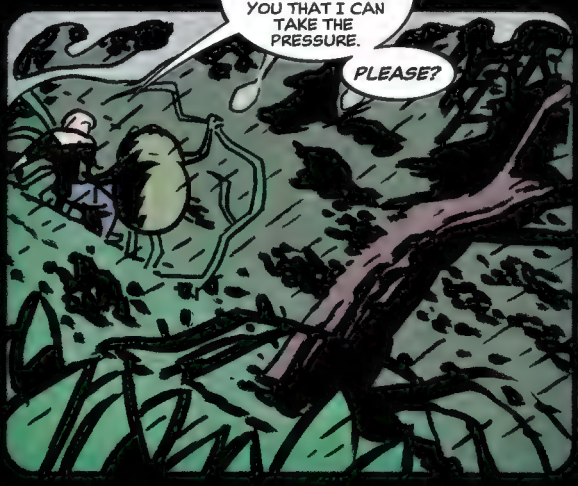
ANY EVENT... I'M GONNA TAKE MY CHANCES ON MY OWN AND TRY TO GET BACK TO CIVILIZATION!

?@#$%!

DOOP?
DOOP... THAT YOU?

THANK GOD! HOW DID YOU FIND ME? JEEZ. I'VE BEEN WANDERING THROUGH THIS PLACE ALL NIGHT... NO SIGN OF ANYTHING BUT TREES BUT...
... BUT THERE'S SOMETHING OUT THERE, MAN. SOMETHING MOVING. MAYBE IT'S THE HORSES. MAYBE THEY ARE FOLLOWING US.

HELL, I'M KIND OF STUCK HERE. DON'T WANNA CUT MYSELF OUT IN CASE I DO MYSELF AN INJURY. SEEM TO BE A LITTLE SHAKY THIS MORNING.
PUT THAT THING DOWN AND HELP ME...


CAN WE GO HOME NOW PLEASE, SIR? I MEAN... I SHOWED YOU THAT I CAN TAKE THE PRESSURE.
PLEASE?

I DON'T CARE ABOUT X-STATIX!
I'M TALKING TO YOU, DOOP!

I JUS' WANNA GO HOME!

CAN YOU HEAR THAT? FOOTSTEPS, AND... LAUGHING. THAT'S LAUGHING, RIGHT?
RIGHT?

OR MAYBE IT'S THE WIND OR MAYBE...
MAYBE THEY'RE LOOKING FOR US. A SEARCH PARTY. X-STATIX THEMSELVES.

FOR ALL I KNOW THAT LITTLE DEVIL IS JUST AS LOST AS I AM.
OR MAYBE... MAYBE THEY'RE PLAYING AROUND WITH ME. YEAH. THAT IS LAUGHING OUTSIDE. THEY'RE LAUGHING AT CORKSCREW. THERE IS NO CODE-X. THAT'S JUST ONE BIG JOKE.

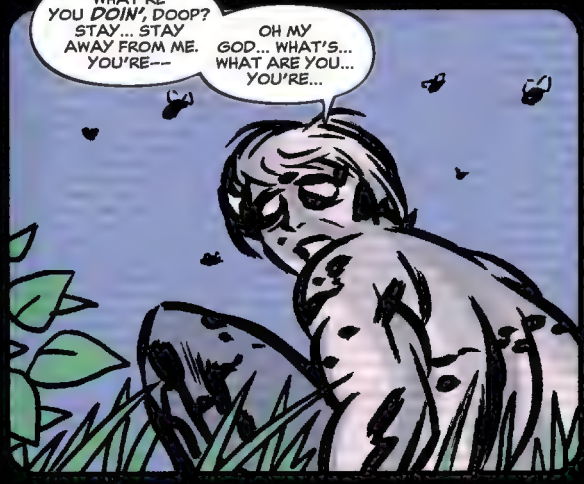
NO ONE MAKES FUN OUTTA CORK-SCREW!

I'LL TEAR THEM UP SO GOOD THEY'LL BE LAUGHING OUTTA THEIR GUTS!

LOOK, I MEAN... I'M SORRY, I... I WAS...

IT WAS DARK. THEY WERE ALL AROUND ME AND...
I GET LIKE THAT SOMETIMES. IT'S LIKE A TRIGGER AND...
I MEAN, THESE THINGS HAPPEN, RIGHT? AND... AND THEY WERE ONLY HORSES.

I KNOW THEY WERE REAL PRETTY BUT...


WHAT'RE YOU DOIN', DOOP? STAY... STAY AWAY FROM ME. YOU'RE--
OH MY GOD... WHAT'S... WHAT ARE YOU... YOU'RE...

OH MY GOD...

AIEEEEEE!

ОЧАРОВУЮ В ЗЕЛЕНЫЙ И ОГНЕННЫЙ

CLKKK
THE END.

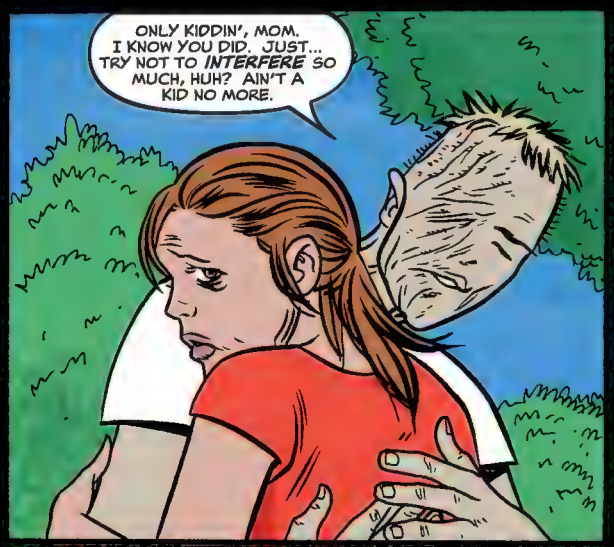
X-STATIX #2

STAN LEE PRESENTS.
GOOD OMENS
PART 2
HOW THE SUPER-HERO BUSINESS WORKS
PETER MILLIGAN writer
MICHAEL ALLRED artist
LAURA ALLRED colorist
GLAMSOT'S NATE PIEKOS letterer
JOHN MISSEGGAES asst. editor
AXEL ALONSO editor
JOE QUESADA chief
BILL JEMAS president
O-FORCE'S FIRST MISSION – TO RESCUE A BUNCH OF ACTORS FROM A GANG OF KIDNAPPERS, POSSIBLY WITH EXTREME MUSLIM CONNECTIONS (RIGHT) – WAS A SUCCESS.
OF COURSE IT WAS A SUCCESS.
EVERYONE HAD BEEN PAID. EVERYONE KNEW THEIR PART.
SURE, THE SCHMUCKS WHO DID THE KIDNAPPING DIDN'T KNOW THEY WERE GONNA END UP DEAD.
BUT THAT'S THEIR FAULT FOR BEING SCHMUCKS.

FUN FOR ALL AGES!
HEY, KIDS! COMICS!
NOW HERE COMES THE HARD PART. THAT DIFFICULT SECOND MISSION.
THE PHONES DON'T STOP. I GET OFFERS AND CRIES FOR HELP BUT NOTHING THAT REALLY GETS MY SKIN ITCHY.
I TURN THEM ALL DOWN, VERY POLITELY.
SHOVE IT WHERE YOU KEEP YOUR BRAINS, BABY.
THEN I GET A CALL FROM ONE OF MY CONTACTS IN THE POLICE DEPARTMENT.
THERE'S THIS KID UP NORTH. GOT THIS AMAZING MENTAL POWER THING. HE CONTROLS THE ENTIRE TOWN. KILLS ANYONE THAT STEPS OUTTA LINE.
NORMALLY WE'D PASS SOMETHING LIKE THIS ON TO X-FORCE.
YOU MEAN X-STATIX.
WHATEVER. THING IS... IF YOU MOVE FAST... AND APPLY GREASE WHERE GREASE SHOULD BE APPLIED...
TELL ME MORE ABOUT THIS KID.

PLEASE... ARNIE... NOT MY HANDS... I TEACH MUSIC... MUSIC IS MY WHOLE LIFE!
MY HANDS ARE MY WHOLE LIFE!
YOUR HANDS ALSO TWIST THE WRISTS AND TWEAK THE EARS OF THE KIDS YOU DON'T LIKE, THE KIDS WITH NO EAR FOR YOUR CRUMMY MUSIC...
OH MY... OH MY G... G... G...
ARNIE!
HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU...
YOU ARE NOT TO REARRANGE THE SKELETAL STRUCTURE OF YOUR OLD TEACHERS.
MOM!
STOP
HE PICKED ON ME... BECAUSE I WAS DIFFERENT...
HE'S APOLOGIZED... AND YOU'VE ALREADY MANIPULATED HIS INNER EAR AND VOCAL CORDS SO HE'S TONE DEAF AND CAN'T SING...
LEAVE IT AT THAT...

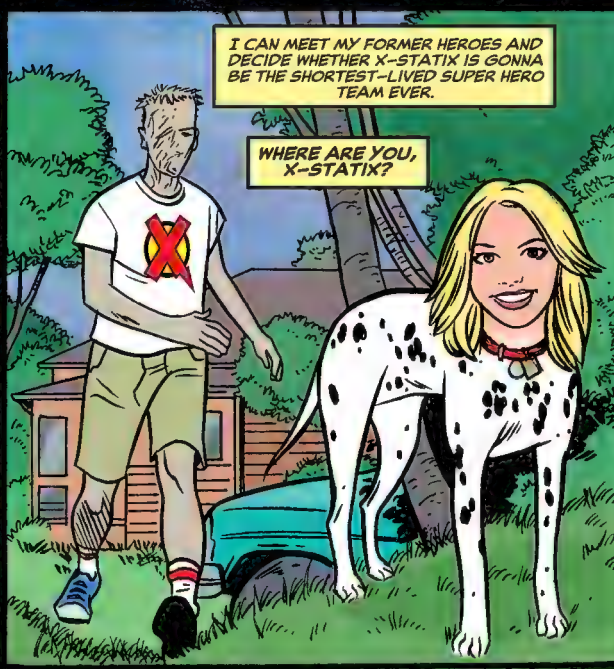
MAYBE I SHOULD START ON YOU. YOU WEREN'T ALWAYS EXACTLY THE PERFECT MOTHER. I USED TO SEE YOU LOOK AT ME SOMETIMES... WISHING I WAS NORMAL...
ARNIE... I ALWAYS... LOVED YOU... I...


ONLY KIDDIN', MOM. I KNOW YOU DID. JUST... TRY NOT TO INTERFERE SO MUCH, HUH? AIN'T A KID NO MORE.

ARNIE... WHAT ABOUT MY HANDS?
COME AND SEE ME IN MY OFFICE TOMORROW AND WE CAN DISCUSS YOUR RECENT BEHAVIOR.

OH BOY. THAT'S A GOOD ONE. YOUR RECENT BEHAVIOR. COOL!
'AFTERNOON, MR. CLANCY.
>Mphhhh...<

I SENSE THE SPY HELICOPTER HIGH ABOVE. THEY'LL BE COMING SOON, I KNOW IT. AND THIS IS THE KIND OF THING X-FORCE AND NOW X-STATIX WILL HANDLE.


I CAN MEET MY FORMER HEROES AND DECIDE WHETHER X-STATIX IS GONNA BE THE SHORTEST-LIVED SUPER HERO TEAM EVER.
WHERE ARE YOU, X-STATIX?

...SLAP BACK IN THE MIDDLE OF A CIVIL WAR!
WAY TO GO, VENUS. I ASKED YOU TO BRING US OUT SOMEWHERE QUIET.
NOT GOOD ENOUGH.
THE SHOOTING MUST HAVE STARTED IN THE INSTANT I 'PORTED US HERE.
HEY, MISTER TOUGH-ASS LEADER... TELL HER HOW MANY TIMES EDIE DUMPED US IN THE CA-CA... AND YOU DIDN'T SAY A DAMN WORD 'BOUT IT!

REBELS. MERCENARIES. U.S.-BACKED GOVERNMENT FORCES. U.N. FORCES.
MUTANTS.
JUST YOUR TYPICAL EARLY TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY DUST-UP.
DID I MENTION THE DIRTY BOMB THAT ONE OF THE ABOVE HAS BEEN DEVELOPING?
GETTING A READING, GUY SMITH. THINK IT'S THE WAY TO THE REBELS' HQ.
WHAT DID HE HAVE FOR HIS LAST MEAL?
McNUGGETS AND FRIES.
AH... IT'S HAPPENING AGAIN.
DEAD GIRL INTO EDIE.
ANOTHER PIECE OF SANITY LOST IN THE CIVIL WAR GOING ON INSIDE MY HEAD.
FIGHTERS STILL ALIVE HERE!
IS THIS MISSION GOVERNED BY THE GENEVA CONVENTION?
THE GENEVA WHAT?

LISTEN, ANARCHIST... IF YOU WANNA PLAY THAT GUNG-HO ALL AMERICAN HERO CRAP... JOIN ANOTHER TEAM.
HOW ABOUT X-FORCE. HEAR THEY USED TO BE PRETTY COOL.
BILLY-BOB! GET PHAT AND GO!
RESPEC', BRO...
BILLY-BOB?
I'M TRYING I...
NO USE. I...
CAN'T... DO... IT...
GOD HELP ME, I'M NORMAL.
QUIT LOOKING AT ME LIKE THAT! I CAN'T HELP IT!
MAYBE IT'S... JUST A PASSING PHASE!

"I FELL IN LOVE WITH HER, THAT SICK TO THE STOMACH AND DIZZY KIND, THE MINUTE I SAW HER.
"... LIVE FOOTAGE OF X-STATIX – WITH NEW TEAM MEMBER VENUS DEE MILO – IN ACTION, SPONSORED TODAY BY..."
"I KIDDED MYSELF THAT SHE WASN'T INTERESTED IN ME BECAUSE SHE WAS SCARED OF PHYSICAL CONTACT.
"TRUTH IS, SHE'S TOO GOOD FOR ME. YEAH, EVEN ME."
BUT IF I CAN'T HAVE HER, NO ONE CAN.
ESPECIALLY GUY SMITH AND HIS TEAM OF HAS-BEENS.
LARRY... WHICH OF OUR LAWYERS MOST RESEMBLES A STARVING TIMBER WOLF WITH RABIES?
AH... THAT'LL BE SHARON GINSBERG.
THEN SEND SHARON GINSBERG HERE...
... GOT SOME CONTRACTUAL MATTERS TO DISCUSS.
CONTRACT

TIMES LIKE THIS... I'M GLAD I'M ALREADY DEAD.
YOU'RE SURE THE DIRTY BOMB'S ABOUT TO GO OFF?
NO... BUT I DON'T WANT TO HANG AROUND TO FIND OUT. LET'S GO, VENUS.
RIGHT.
MAKE IT SOMEPLACE HOT, DEE.
I'D RATHER SOMEWHERE COLD...
WAIT.
WAIT? WAIT IS SOMETHING YOU DO WHEN YOU'RE NOT STANDING NEXT TO A HOME-MADE NUKE!
WE CAN'T LET IT BLOW HERE... IT'S STILL A DENSELY POPULATED AREA.
LEAVE US HERE, VENUS.
AND TAKE THE BOMB.

THAT'S SUICIDE!
THAT'S HER JOB!
YOU MEAN THAT'S YOUR HANG-UP! YOU COULDN'T STOP HER JOINING, SO YOU'RE MAKING SURE SHE AIN'T AROUND FOR LONG!
GUY IS RIGHT, I'M THE TELEPORTER.
AND I'M UNDER NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT MY LIFE-EXPECTANCY.
I'M GOIN' WITH HER!
YOU'RE NEEDED HERE, X-STATIX!
BHAFF

COME ON! FIGHT! HIT ME BACK! THROW SOME OF THAT FREAKY MARTIAL ARTS STUFF AT ME!
WHY THE HELL AIN'T YOU FIGHTIN', MAN? AIN'T THAT WHAT WE PEOPLE DO?
WE FIGHT...
...GET ALL BLOODIED UP...
...THEN FEEL BETTER AFTERWARDS...
...UHNNN!

I'LL TELL YOU WHY I WON'T FIGHT YOU.
YOU FEEL SO GUILTY ABOUT EDIE DYING...

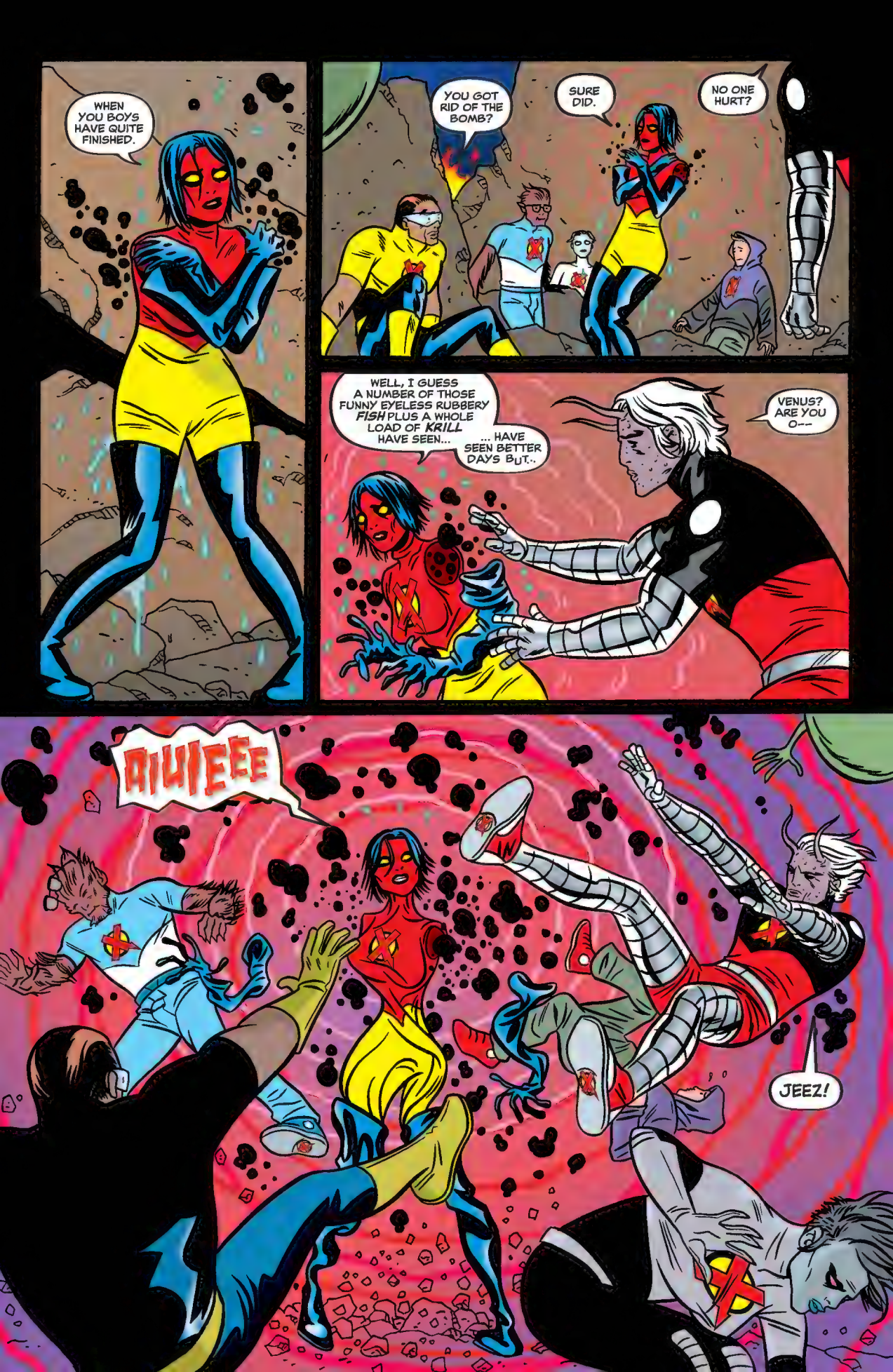
GET OUTTA HERE!
... YOU FEEL SO RESPONSIBLE FOR HER DEATH THAT YOU WANT TO BE PUNISHED!

THAT'S INSANE!
IT'S THE SAD AND PITIFUL TRUTH.

YOU WANNA BE HURT...

YOU GOT PLENTY OF OPTIONS, ALICAR. SACK-CLOTH SHIRT. FLAGELLATION. DRINK. DRUGS. FAST CARS. FAST FOOD. PLENTY OF WAYS TO PUNISH YOUR-SELF.

BUT DON'T EXPECT ME TO DO YOUR DIRTY WORK FOR YOU.
A-HEM.


WHEN YOU BOYS HAVE QUITE FINISHED.
YOU GOT RID OF THE BOMB?
SURE DID.
NO ONE HURT?
WELL, I GUESS A NUMBER OF THOSE FUNNY EYELESS RUBBERY FISH PLUS A WHOLE LOAD OF KRILL HAVE SEEN...
... HAVE SEEN BETTER DAYS BUT..
VENUS? ARE YOU O--
AIUIEEE
JEEZ!

X-STATIX

I BELIEVE I KNOW WHAT THE PROBLEM MIGHT BE.

I CAN TELL YOU THAT! I CAN'T USE MY FAT NO MORE. AND WHAT AM I WITHOUT THAT? JUST ANOTHER PIECE O' TRAILER TRASH.

I BELIEVE YOUR INABILITY TO ACCESS YOUR X POWER IS A SYMPTOM... OF A DEEPER MALAISE...

YOU ARE DENYING YOUR TRUE SELF. YOUR TRUE DESIRES. AND UNTIL YOU ARE HONEST AND ACCEPT WHO YOU REALLY ARE...

WISH I COULDN'T HEAR THEM. WHAT MYLES IS DESCRIBING IS VERY SIMILAR TO A PROBLEM EDIE HAD A WHILE AGO.

SHE HAD TROUBLE WITH HER 'PORTING... UNTIL SHE FACED UP TO HER PAST... HER LITTLE GIRL.

MY GOD. I'VE WALLOWED IN SO MUCH SELF-PITY... WORRYING SO MUCH ABOUT MY STATE OF MIND... THAT I HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT THEM.

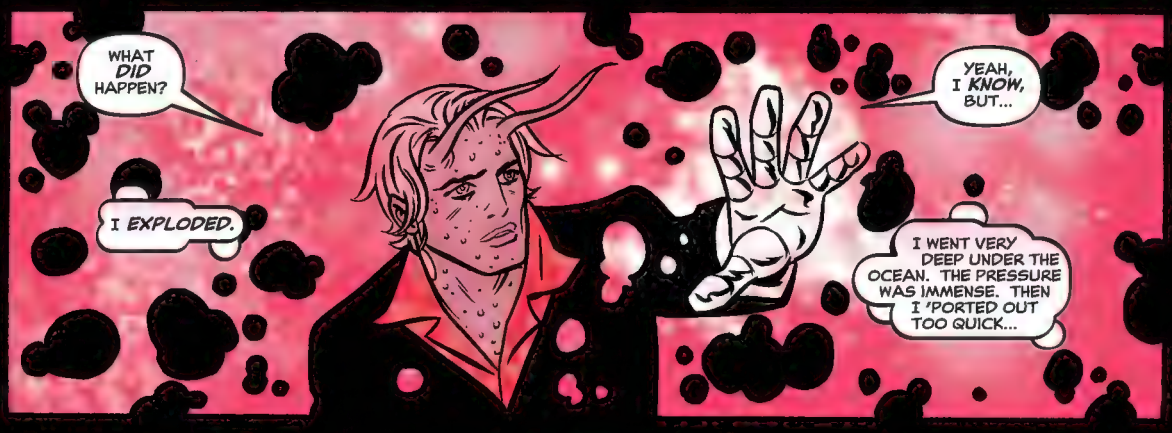
EDIE'S MOTHER. AND HER DAUGHTER, WHO THINKS SHE'S EDIE'S KID SISTER.

GUY... LOOK... MAN, I'M SORRY. WHAT I DID BACK THERE... WAS JUST DUMB.
MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT. MAYBE I DO FEEL LOUSY AND GUILTY AND THINK THAT A LITTLE PAIN MIGHT MAKE ME FEEL BETTER. BE SIMPLER IF I JUST WENT TO CHURCH.
BUT LET'S TRY TO BE ON THE SAME TEAM AGAIN, HUH?
IT'S WHAT EDIE WOULD HAVE WANTED.
HE'LL COME AROUND.
MAYBE. BUT TIKE ALICAR WON'T BE WAITIN' FOR HIM.
OH GOD... NOW I KNOW THINGS ARE BAD.
WE'RE REFERRING TO OURSELVES IN THE THIRD PERSON!

AH... VENUS?
WHERE ARE YOU?
RIGHT HERE.

ARE YOU... IN THAT STUFF?
NO, GUY.
I AM THAT STUFF.

PROFESSOR XAVIER BUILT THE TANK FOR ME. IT WORKS SOMETHING LIKE A DIALYSIS MACHINE. CONTAINS SOME COMPOUNDS THAT XAVIER CREATED THAT CLEAN BETWEEN MY MOLECULES.
ESPECIALLY USEFUL AFTER WHAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY.

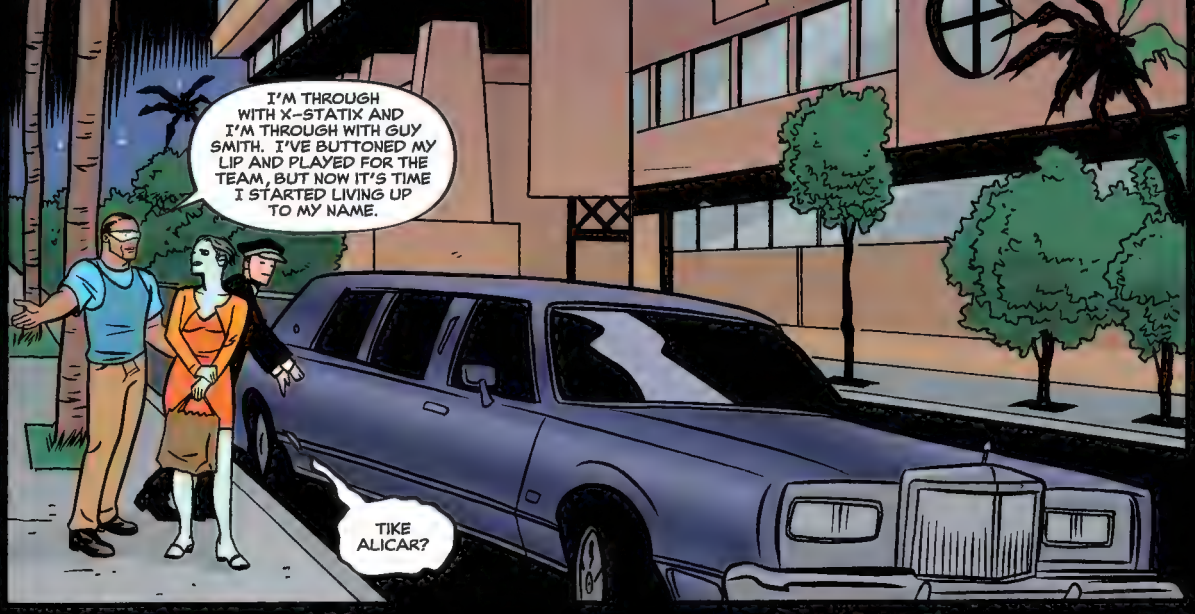

WHAT DID HAPPEN?
I EXPLODED.
YEAH, I KNOW, BUT...
I WENT VERY DEEP UNDER THE OCEAN. THE PRESSURE WAS IMMENSE. THEN I 'PORTED OUT TOO QUICK...

SO... YOU'RE GONNA BE OKAY?
I'M GONNA BE FINE.

FINE ENOUGH FOR DINNER?

ON ONE CONDITION.

MY TAB.


I'M THROUGH WITH X-STATIX AND I'M THROUGH WITH GUY SMITH. I'VE BUTTONED MY LIP AND PLAYED FOR THE TEAM, BUT NOW IT'S TIME I STARTED LIVING UP TO MY NAME.
TIKE ALICAR?

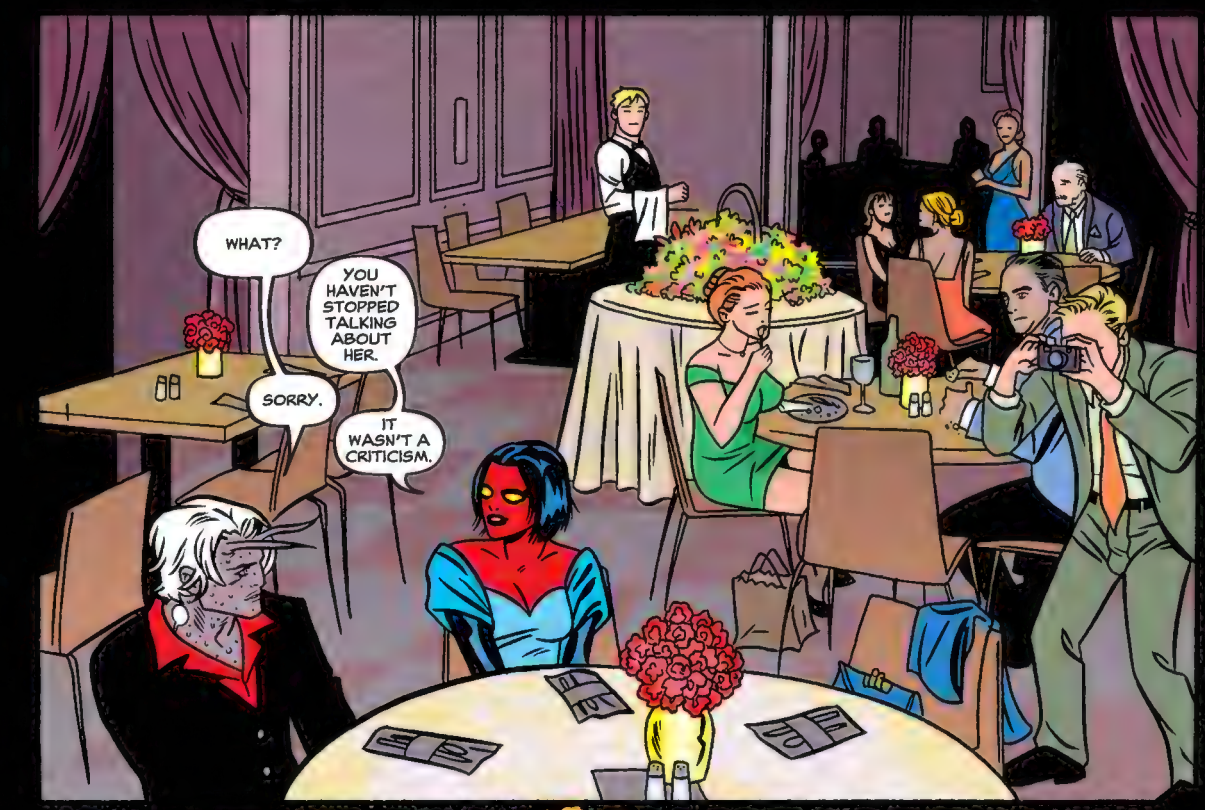
WATCH.
GONNA SHOW YOU HOW THIS COUNTRY WORKS.
JEWELRY
WEISFIELD
KRESH

YOU THINK THEY'RE GONNA CALL THE COPS? HAVE ME ARRESTED?
LET'S CUT TO *TEN MINUTES LATER...*

"SEE? WE'RE FAMOUS FOR *BEING* FAMOUS.
WE'RE ALWAYS HAPPY FOR THE ANARCHIST OR ANY OF HIS COLLEAGUES TO SMASH INTO OUR STORE!
"WE'RE GOOD 'PUBLICITY'."

THIS TEAM WAS NEVER PRIMARILY ABOUT FIGHTING EVIL ANYHOW. BUT NOW I'M GONNA GO ONE STEP FURTHER AND GIVE UP ALL PRETENSE.
SO... WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO, TIKE ALICAR?
ANYTHING I LIKE, AND GET AWAY WITH IT.

WHAT ABOUT *YOU, DEAD GIRL?*
WANNA *LIVE* A LITTLE?

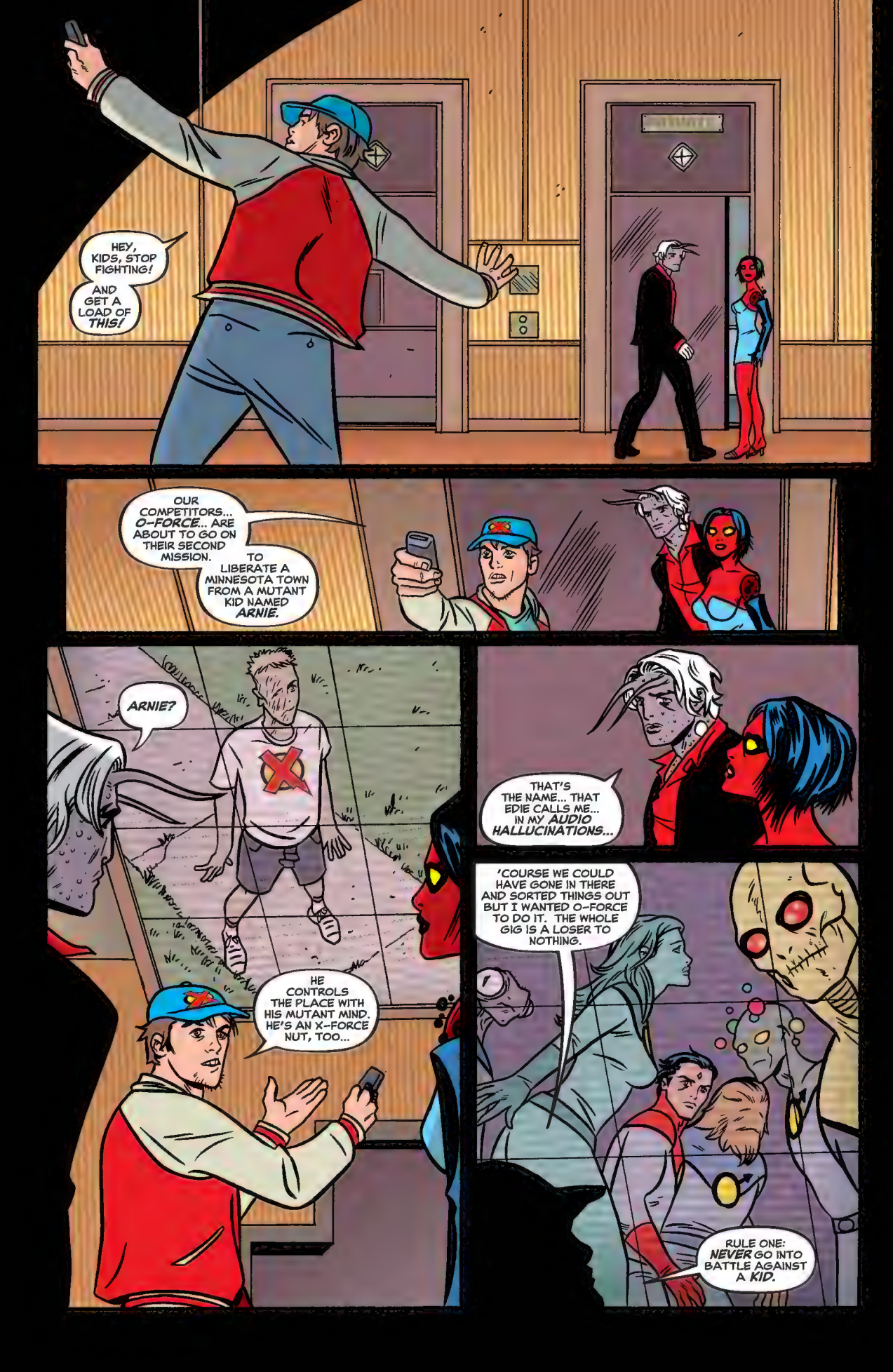

WHAT?
YOU HAVEN'T STOPPED TALKING ABOUT HER.
SORRY.
IT WASN'T A CRITICISM.

SMIK
JEEZ... WHAT...?

SLUT!
WHORE OF BABYLON!
RAT! EDIE NOT DEAD FOUR MONTHS AND YOU'VE ALREADY FOUND A REPLACEMENT!
F.O.E.
FRIENDS OF EDIE

WHAT IS THIS?
IT'S CALLED CELEBRITY, VENUS. YOU'RE IN THE BIG LEAGUE NOW. BIG FAME, BIG MONEY... BIG WINDOWS. GET USED TO IT.
AND GET US OUT OF HERE.

YOU KNEW THAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN.
IT WAS A POSSIBILITY... I DIDN'T KNOW FOR SURE.
BUT THIS IS HOW IT IS, VENUS.
WHAT IS IT WITH YOU? DO YOU THINK YOU'RE SO DAMN ATTRACTIVE THAT I HAVE TO BE WARNED OFF YOU? DO YOU THINK THE MOMENT YOU DECIDE YOU'RE READY TO REPLACE EDIE WITH ME I'LL COME A-RUNNING?
NO, I...
I WANTED TO HAVE DINNER WITH YOU BECAUSE YOU'RE TEAM LEADER AND I REALLY BELIEVE IN THIS TEAM AND WANNA BE A PART OF IT.
AS FOR ANYTHING ELSE... YOU'RE NOT MY TYPE.


HEY, KIDS, STOP FIGHTING!
AND GET A LOAD OF THIS!
OUR COMPETITORS... O-FORCE... ARE ABOUT TO GO ON THEIR SECOND MISSION.
TO LIBERATE A MINNESOTA TOWN FROM A MUTANT KID NAMED ARNIE.
ARNIE?
HE CONTROLS THE PLACE WITH HIS MUTANT MIND. HE'S AN X-FORCE NUT, TOO...
THAT'S THE NAME... THAT EDIE CALLS ME... IN MY AUDIO HALLUCINATIONS...
'COURSE WE COULD HAVE GONE IN THERE AND SORTED THINGS OUT BUT I WANTED O-FORCE TO DO IT. THE WHOLE GIG IS A LOSER TO NOTHING.
RULE ONE: NEVER GO INTO BATTLE AGAINST A KID.

SO WHY ARE O-FORCE DOING IT?
I HAVE A CONTACT IN THE POLICE... O'SULLIVAN THINKS HE'S HIS CONTACT... I GOT HIM TO NUDGE O'SULLIVAN IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, THE SCHMUCK.

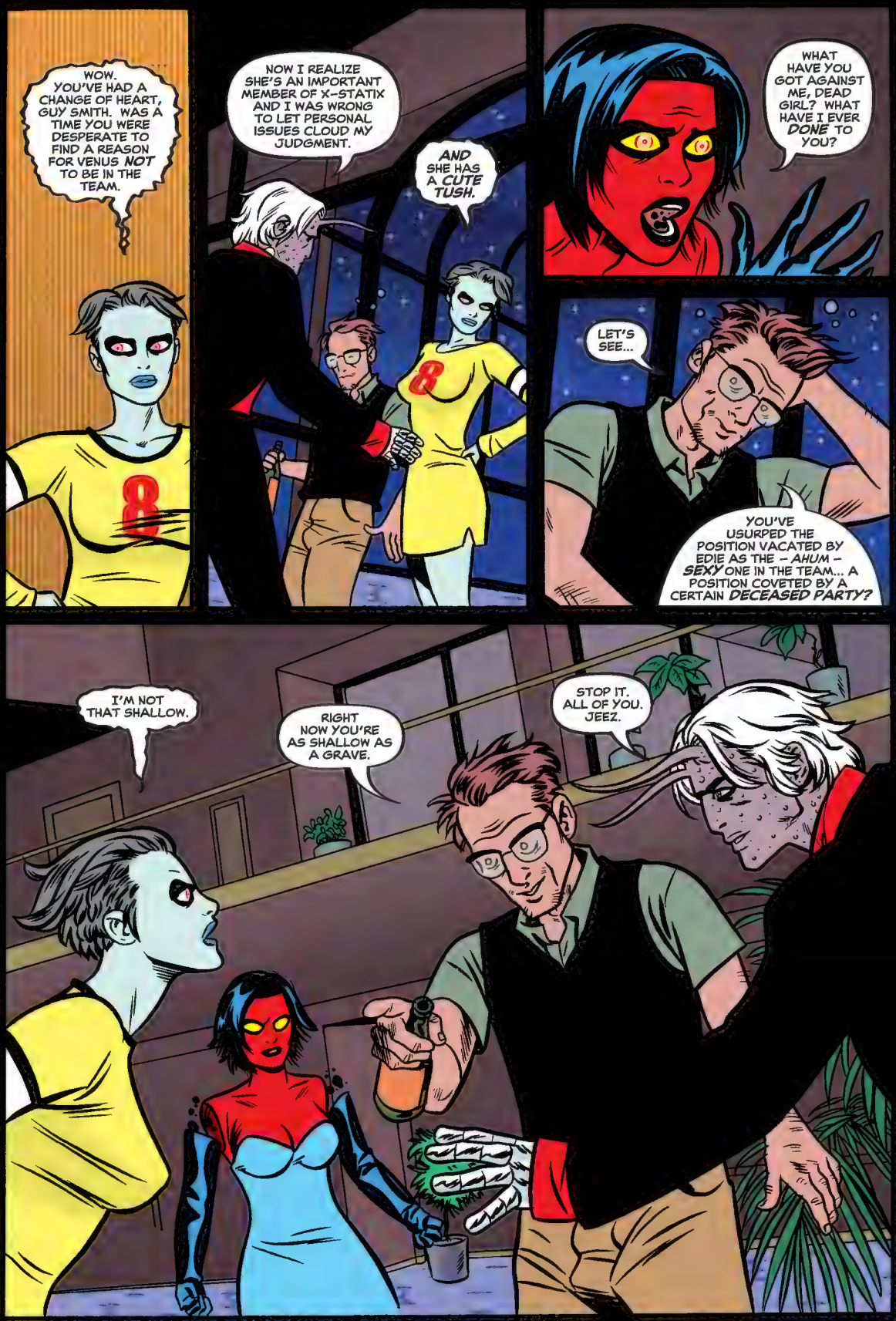
IT'S HOW THE SUPER-HERO BUSINESS WORKS.

MR. FREEMAN?
SHE JUST FORCED HER WAY IN...
THAT'S OKAY.
WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU, BABY?

I AM NOT YOUR BABY. MY NAME IS SHARON GINSBERG.
AND THIS IS A COURT ORDER FORBIDDING THE PROPERTY KNOWN AS VENUS DEE MILO FROM BEING A MEMBER OF THE TEAM KNOWN AS X-STATIX.

X-STATIX #3

MY NAME IS SHARON GINSBERG AND I AM AUTHORIZED ON BEHALF OF SOLOMON O'SULLIVAN ENTERPRISES TO OFFER THE PROPERTY KNOWN AS VENUS DEE MILO A POSITION IN THE TEAM KNOWN AS...
... WAIT FOR IT...
O-FORCE.
I-- I ALREADY BELONG TO A TEAM.
THAT'S RIGHT. SHE ALREADY BELONGS TO A TEAM.
THE MOMENT YOU SMUDGED YOUR PRETTY LITTLE DUO-LIMBED MONIKER ON THIS CONTRACT YOU DIDN'T BELONG TO NO ONE BUT O'SULLIVAN.
THIS SIGNATURE... IT IS YOURS? YOU ACTUALLY SIGNED THIS CONTRACT WITH THE DEVIL?
IT WAS REALLY DUMB... BUT I WAS YOUNG AND JUST STARTING OUT AND... I'D FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT IT.
CONTRACT
Solomon O'Sullivan Enterprises and Venus Dee Milo
SORRY.
IF SHE DOES ANYTHING THAT CAN BE PERCEIVED AS PARTICIPATING IN YOUR TEAM, I WILL PERSONALLY MAKE SURE SHE IS BEGGING FROM STREET CORNERS WITHIN A MONTH.
WHAT'S IT LIKE BEING YOU?
DO I LOOK DISAPPOINTED?
I DON'T CARE WHAT SHE SIGNED. VENUS IS ONE OF US NOW... AND NO PIECE OF PAPER IS GOING TO CHANGE THAT.
RIPP
NICE GESTURE. THAT'S A COPY.
SEE YOU IN COURT.


WOW. YOU'VE HAD A CHANGE OF HEART, GUY SMITH. WAS A TIME YOU WERE DESPERATE TO FIND A REASON FOR VENUS NOT TO BE IN THE TEAM.
NOW I REALIZE SHE'S AN IMPORTANT MEMBER OF X-STATIX AND I WAS WRONG TO LET PERSONAL ISSUES CLOUD MY JUDGMENT.
AND SHE HAS A CUTE TUSH.
WHAT HAVE YOU GOT AGAINST ME, DEAD GIRL? WHAT HAVE I EVER DONE TO YOU?
LET'S SEE...
YOU'VE USURPED THE POSITION VACATED BY EDIE AS THE -- AHUM -- SEXY ONE IN THE TEAM... A POSITION COVETED BY A CERTAIN DECEASED PARTY?
I'M NOT THAT SHALLOW.
RIGHT NOW YOU'RE AS SHALLOW AS A GRAVE.
STOP IT. ALL OF YOU. JEEZ.

THANKS FOR... BELIEVING IN ME, ANYWAY, GUY. I REALLY APPRECIATE IT.
YOU'RE WELCOME.

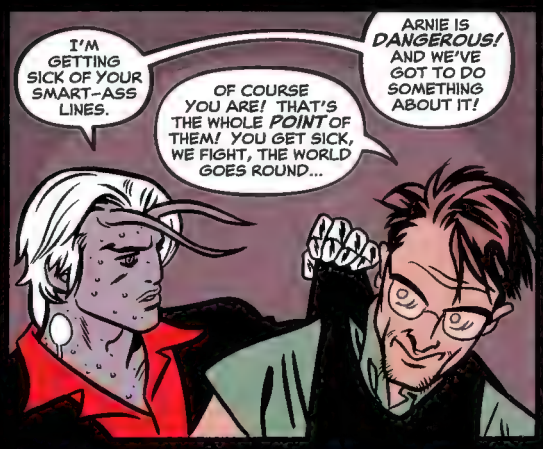
EVER SEEN A DEAD PERSON PROJECTILE VOMIT?

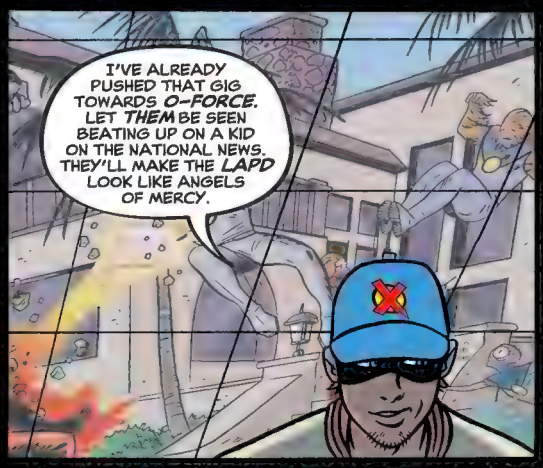
YOU'RE WATCHING THIS TOO, AREN'T YOU?
OR ARE YOU DOING MORE THAN JUST WATCH?

WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT WE HAVE TO PULL TOGETHER AS A TEAM. I WANT THIS ARNIE THING SORTED OUT...
ARNIE?
ARNIE LUNT. TEENAGE MUTANT WITH ASTOUNDING MENTAL POWERS. USING THEM TO WAGE A CAMPAIGN OF TERROR ON A SMALL MINNESOTA TOWN.

OH. THAT ARNIE!
ꝏꝏꝏ ꝏꝏꝏꝏꝏꝏꝏ ꝏꝏ & ꝏꝏ ꝏꝏꝏ ꝏꝏ

I THINK THAT ARNIE...
... I THINK HE'S BEEN BEAMING THESE IMAGES OF EDIE INTO MY HEAD.
RIGHT, AND THE FREEMASONS ARE SENDING SUBLIMINAL MESSAGES VIA CORNFLAKES BOXES.


I'M GETTING SICK OF YOUR SMART-ASS LINES.
OF COURSE YOU ARE! THAT'S THE WHOLE POINT OF THEM! YOU GET SICK, WE FIGHT, THE WORLD GOES ROUND...
ARNIE IS DANGEROUS! AND WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!


I'VE ALREADY PUSHED THAT GIG TOWARDS O-FORCE. LET THEM BE SEEN BEATING UP ON A KID ON THE NATIONAL NEWS. THEY'LL MAKE THE LAPD LOOK LIKE ANGELS OF MERCY.

THIS MIGHT BE TOO BIG FOR A MANUFACTURED TEAM MORE INTERESTED IN BEING POPULAR THAN GETTING IT RIGHT.
I TAKE IT YOU'RE REFERRING TO US?

TIKE... I KNOW WE'VE HAD OUR DIFFERENCES OF OPINION. AND IT WAS REALLY DAMN JUVENILE OF ME TO REFUSE YOUR HANDSHAKE THE OTHER DAY BUT...

I DON'T REMEMBER SAYING I GIVE A DAMN.
WHERE'RE YOU GOING?

I'M GOING ON TOUR. I'M GOING LIVE, MAN. GIVIN' OUR PUBLIC WHAT IT WANTS. WITHOUT THE IRRITATING NECESSITY OF HAVING TO GO OUT AN' FIGHT PEOPLE ALL AROUND THE PLANET.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

TALKIN' 'BOUT A KIND OF SOCIAL EXPERIMENT. GOT LOTS OF INTEREST FROM SPONSORS. DOKE. NEWT TV. THE N.B.A. GONNA MAKE CRAPLOADS, MAN.
YOU WID' ME, DEAD GIRL?

RIGHT BEHIND YOU, TIKE ALICAR.

MYLES?
SORRY. I INTEND GETTING DRUNK AND WRITING IMPENETRABLE PROSE.
PHAT?

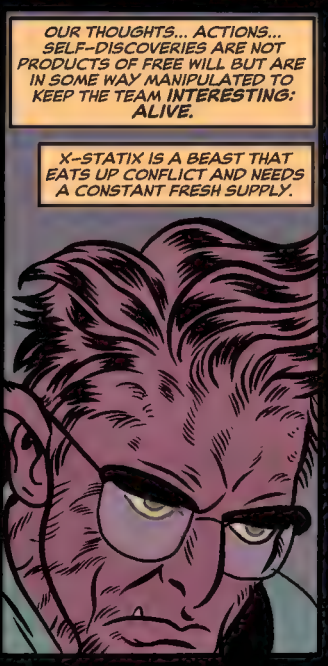
FOR WHAT HE'S WORTH, BILLY BOB HAS GONE HOME.

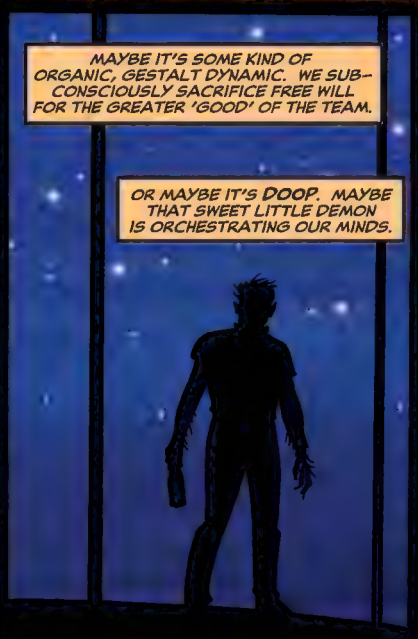
Stan Lee Presents:
GOOD OMENS
Part 3 of 5: That's Entertainment!
PETER MILLIGAN: WRITER
MICHAEL ALLRED: ARTIST
LAURA ALLRED: COLORIST
BLAMBOT'S NATE PIEKOS: LETTERER
JOHN MIESEGAYS: ASST. EDITOR
AXEL ALONSO: EDITOR
JOE QUESADA: CHIEF
BILL JEMAS: PRESIDENT
LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE THE LEADER OF A ONE MAN BAND, GUY.
NO OFFENSE, DOOP.

DANGEROUS THOUGHTS.
I AM NOT GAY.
NOR IS BILLY BOB, AKA PHAT.

OR RATHER, WE ARE IN A STATE OF GAY SLASH NOT-GAY: MULTI-SEXUAL CATS IN SHRODINGER'S BOX.
ALSO, DEAD GIRL ISN'T JEALOUS OF VENUS DEE MILO. TIKE AND GUY LIKE EACH OTHER AND WANT TO HELP EACH OTHER GET OVER THE DEATH OF EDIE SAWYER.

EXCEPT THAT KIND OF BEHAVIOR MAKES X-STATIX A BORING BOY.
SO THIS IS THE DANGEROUS THOUGHT:


OUR THOUGHTS... ACTIONS... SELF-DISCOVERIES ARE NOT PRODUCTS OF FREE WILL BUT ARE IN SOME WAY MANIPULATED TO KEEP THE TEAM INTERESTING: ALIVE.
X-STATIX IS A BEAST THAT EATS UP CONFLICT AND NEEDS A CONSTANT FRESH SUPPLY.


MAYBE IT'S SOME KIND OF ORGANIC, GESTALT DYNAMIC. WE SUB-CONSCIOUSLY SACRIFICE FREE WILL FOR THE GREATER 'GOOD' OF THE TEAM.
OR MAYBE IT'S DOOP. MAYBE THAT SWEET LITTLE DEMON IS ORCHESTRATING OUR MINDS.

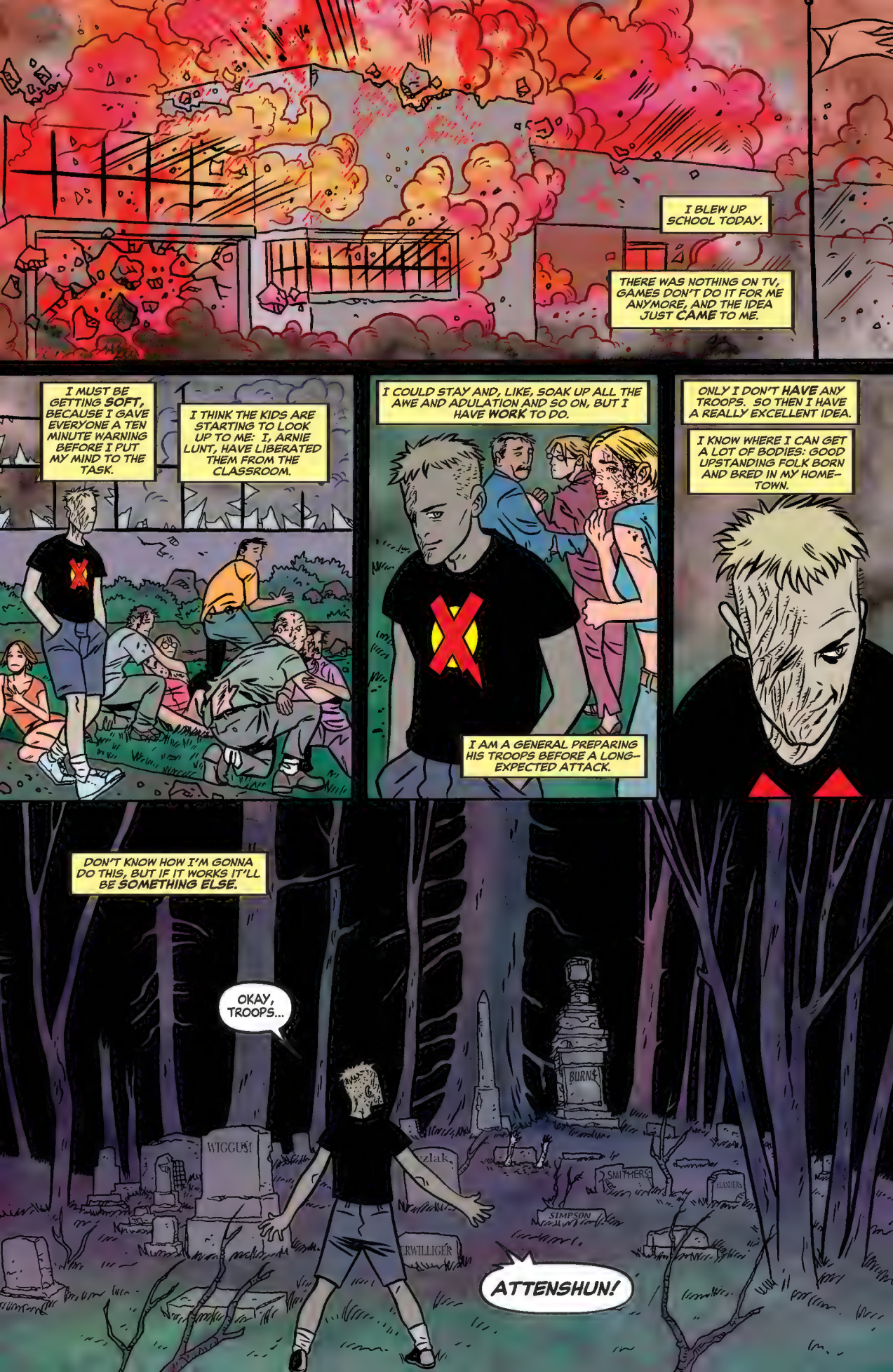
OR MAYBE I AM GAY.
AND WE DO ALL HATE EACH OTHER.
AND I AM QUITE SIMPLY GOING INSANE.

INSANE.
"I BUY YOU THIS COOL HOUSE. I GIVE YOU ENOUGH MONEY TO FURNISH IT THREE TIMES OVER.
"AND WHAT DO YOU DO?"
WE JUST FEEL MORE... COMFORTABLE LIKE THIS.
BUT YOU COULD ALL HAVE A BEDROOM EACH. YOU'D HAVE SPACE. PRIVACY.
MORIN 818 SUPERLINER
MAKES TALKIN' TO EACH OTHER DIFFICULT.
SORRY IF WE DON'T COME UP TO YOUR EXPECTATIONS, BILLY BOB.
IT'S NOT ABOUT EXPECTATIONS. I'M...
I'M JUST TRYING TO HELP.
HELP? WHAT ARE WE... BEGGARS THAT CAN'T FEND FER OURSELVES?
YOU TELL HIM, PA REILLY!
THE BOY WANTS TO HELP HIS FAMILY. WHAT'S SO BAD 'BOUT THAT?

COULD YOU PLEASE ALL GO AWAY? THIS IS PRIVATE PROPERTY!
MAYBE BE EASIER... IF YOU WENT AWAY, BILLY BOB.
YOU BEING HERE... IT UNSETTLES EVERYTHING. ALL THE CROWDS AND PRESS AN' ALL.
YOU DON'T RIGHTLY BELONG WITH THE LIKES OF US NO MORE.
DON'T BELONG? YOU'RE MY FAMILY.
WAS.
I HIT A LOCAL BAR AND SPEND ABOUT THREE HOURS BUYING ALL MY OLD FRIENDS DRINKS.
I SHARE WITH THEM MY LITTLE PROBLEM: THAT FOR THE TIME BEING I AM UNABLE TO ACCESS MY MUTANT POWERS.
LATER THOSE SAME OLD FRIENDS LET ME KNOW HOW TICKLED THEY ARE TO SEE GOOD OL' BILLY BOB AGAIN.
DAMN RICH KID!
THINKS HE'S TOO GOOD FOR US!
HEAR HE'S TURNED GAY!

FAME, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: WHAT IS IT... BUT THE LIFEBLOOD OF THE AMERICAN DREAM!
IN THE SAME WAY THAT ONE OF OUR FOUNDING FATHERS MIGHT LAY ASIDE HIS SIMPLE PLOW AND TAKE UPON HIMSELF THE YOKE OF THE PRESIDENCY...
SO THE GREAT-- AND WHOLLY AMERICAN -- THING ABOUT FAME IS THAT ANY OF US... HUMBLE MEAT-PACKER... HONEST BUS DRIVER...
...FOXY YOUNG THING WITH THE MUTANT ABILITY TO VAPORIZE STEEL...
...ANY OF US CAN HAVE THIS DREAM. A DREAM REALIZED BY YOU, MY FRIENDS... THE PEOPLE CHOSEN BY THE PEOPLE TO BE O-FORCE.
JUST TRY NOT TO GET CAUGHT WHACKING THIS KID ON CAMERA, RIGHT?
IT MIGHT NOT BE SO EASY, O'SULLIVAN.

IN FACT... BASED ON MY LONG-RANGED EXPERIENCE OF ARNIE LUNT... I'D SAY IT WAS ONE HIGHLY DANGEROUS MISSION.
YOU AND YOUR TEAM ARE ON THE WAY OUT, GUY. WHY DON'T YOU ADMIT IT AND LOSE WITH A LITTLE DIGNITY.
SPIKE FREEMAN SET YOU UP SO YOU'D TAKE THIS MISSION.
RIGHT. THAT SOUNDS VERY LIKELY.
COULD A FEW OF YOU GOOD PEOPLE PLEASE SHOW OUR UNWELCOME VISITOR THE DOOR?
I KNOW YOU'RE JUST SORE BECAUSE I HAVE THE LOVELY VENUS DEE MILO UNDER CONTRACT... AND IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE SHE JOINS US.
THIS ISN'T ABOUT VENUS...
... THIS IS ABOUT ARNIE...
BEFORE YOU GO IN THERE YOU HAVE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT HIS POWERS...
NGGGNN
THIS IS A THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLD KID!
HOW TOUGH CAN HE BE?


I BLEW UP SCHOOL TODAY.
THERE WAS NOTHING ON TV, GAMES DON'T DO IT FOR ME ANYMORE, AND THE IDEA JUST CAME TO ME.
I MUST BE GETTING SOFT, BECAUSE I GAVE EVERYONE A TEN MINUTE WARNING BEFORE I PUT MY MIND TO THE TASK.
I THINK THE KIDS ARE STARTING TO LOOK UP TO ME: I, ARNIE LUNT, HAVE LIBERATED THEM FROM THE CLASSROOM.
I COULD STAY AND, LIKE, SOAK UP ALL THE AWE AND ADULATION AND SO ON, BUT I HAVE WORK TO DO.
I AM A GENERAL PREPARING HIS TROOPS BEFORE A LONG-EXPECTED ATTACK.
ONLY I DON'T HAVE ANY TROOPS. SO THEN I HAVE A REALLY EXCELLENT IDEA.
I KNOW WHERE I CAN GET A LOT OF BODIES: GOOD UPSTANDING FOLK BORN AND BRED IN MY HOME-TOWN.
DON'T KNOW HOW I'M GONNA DO THIS, BUT IF IT WORKS IT'LL BE SOMETHING ELSE.
OKAY, TROOPS...
ATTENSHUN!
WIGGUM
BURNS
SMITHERS
SIMPSON

AN ESTIMATED ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND PEOPLE FLOCK TO SANTA MONICA TO SEE THE TIKE ALICAR AND DEAD GIRL ROAD SHOW!
WINCHESTER SYSTEMS
TIKE ALICAR AND DEAD GIRL

THAT'S RIGHT, KID. BLAST AWAY! BLAST AWAY!
SAMSMUNG
WINCHESTER SYSTEMS

NOW YOU WILL SEE THE INCREDIBLE DEAD GIRL RECONSTITUTE THE SHATTERED PARTS OF HER BODY!
AND REMEMBER, BROTHERS AND SISTERS... DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME!
death & anarchy ROADSHOW
DIET

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?
RUNNING THE TIKE ALICAR AND DEAD GIRL ROAD SHOW. AFTER THIS WE'RE MOVING TO LAS VEGAS. THEN TEXAS. THEN NEW YORK. MY AGENT'S NEGOTIATING A TOUR OF EUROPE AS WE SPEAK.

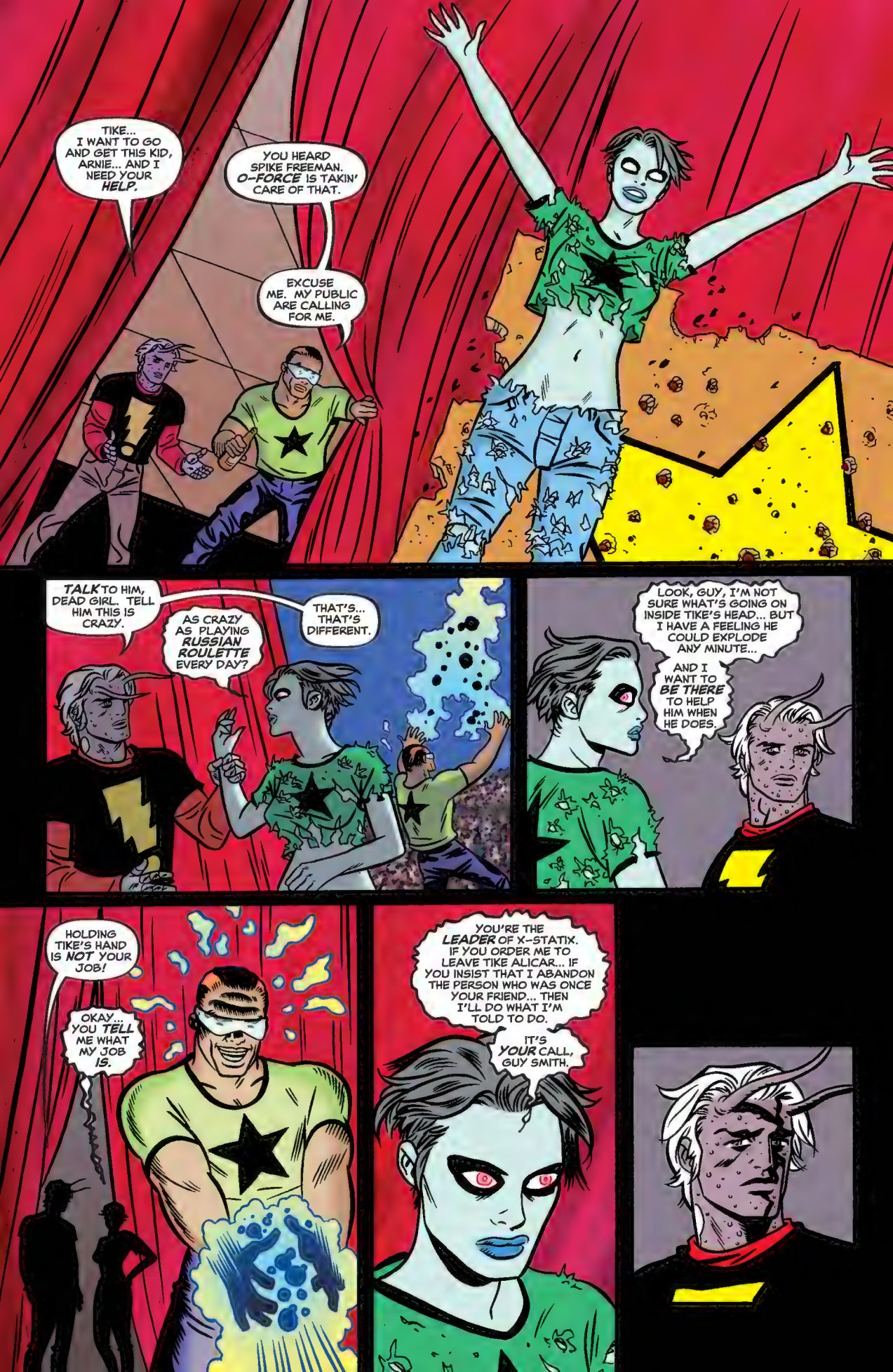
THIS IS NO BETTER THAN A CONEY ISLAND FREAK SHOW.
DIET DOKE
THERE'S A DIFFERENCE. THIS TIME WE'RE IN CONTROL.
THIS TIME THEY'RE THE FREAKS.

LOOK AT THEM. I COULD DO ANYTHING I LIKE WITH THEM. THEY'D FOLLOW ME ANYWHERE. I COULD START A RELIGION.
IT'S TRUE... I COULD START A NEW RELIGION.
AND THEY'D END UP CRUCIFYING YOU.
WINCHESTER SYSTEMS

THEY'RE GONNA END UP DOING THAT ANYWAY. TO ALL OF US. SOONER OR LATER.

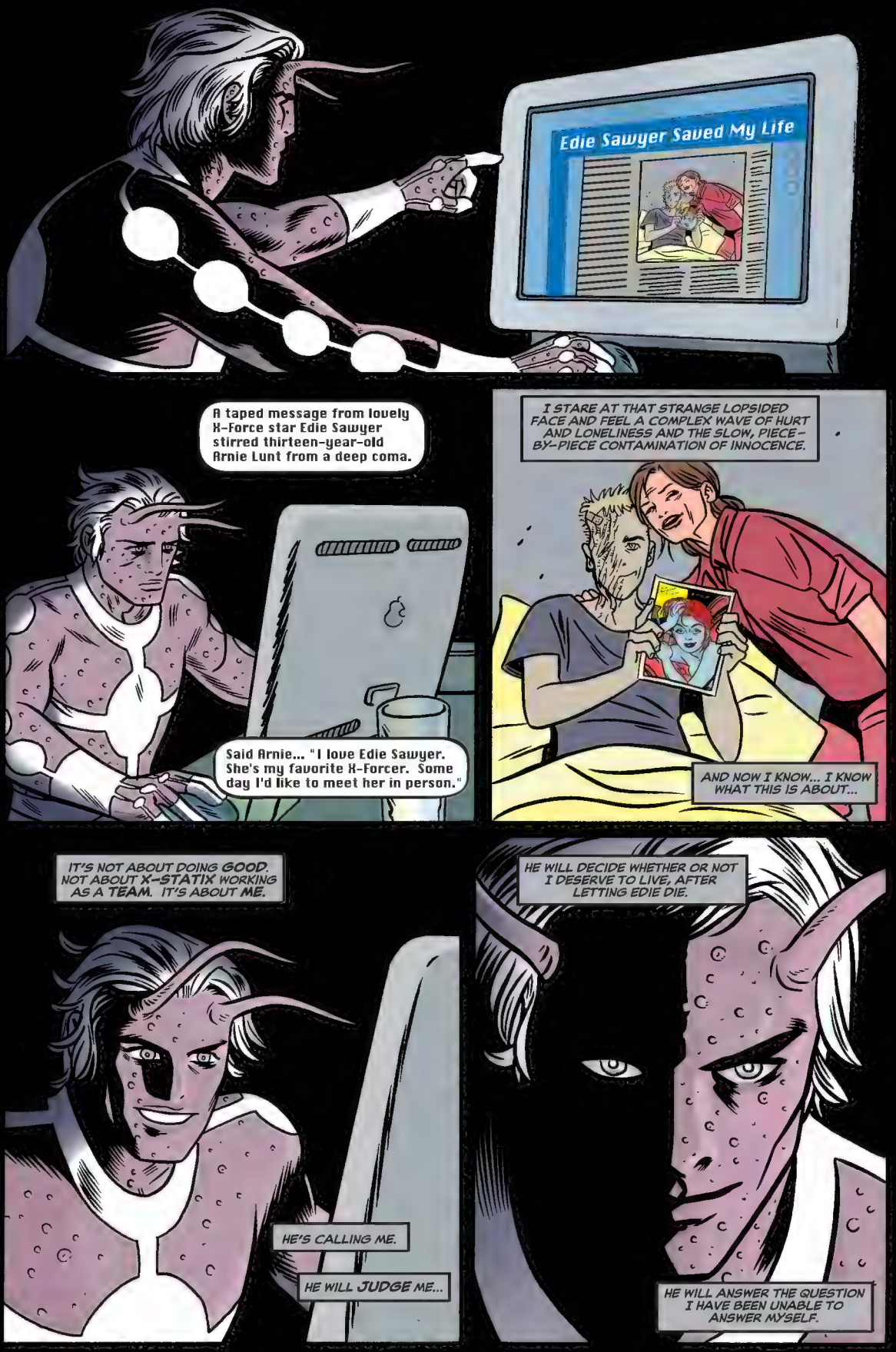
THIS IS THE NEW AGE OF SUPER HEROES. WE DON'T FIGHT ANYONE. WE DON'T SAVE THE WORLD. WE DON'T DO GOOD.
SO WHAT'S THE POINT OF US?
IF WE DON'T USE WHAT WE ARE FOR GOOD... WHAT DO WE DO?

WE ENTERTAIN.


TIKE... I WANT TO GO AND GET THIS KID, ARNIE... AND I NEED YOUR HELP.
YOU HEARD SPIKE FREEMAN. O-FORCE IS TAKIN' CARE OF THAT.
EXCUSE ME. MY PUBLIC ARE CALLING FOR ME.
TALK TO HIM, DEAD GIRL. TELL HIM THIS IS CRAZY.
AS CRAZY AS PLAYING RUSSIAN ROULETTE EVERY DAY?
THAT'S... THAT'S DIFFERENT.
LOOK, GUY, I'M NOT SURE WHAT'S GOING ON INSIDE TIKE'S HEAD... BUT I HAVE A FEELING HE COULD EXPLODE ANY MINUTE...
AND I WANT TO BE THERE TO HELP HIM WHEN HE DOES.
HOLDING TIKE'S HAND IS NOT YOUR JOB!
OKAY... YOU TELL ME WHAT MY JOB IS.
YOU'RE THE LEADER OF X-STATIX. IF YOU ORDER ME TO LEAVE TIKE ALICAR... IF YOU INSIST THAT I ABANDON THE PERSON WHO WAS ONCE YOUR FRIEND... THEN I'LL DO WHAT I'M TOLD TO DO.
IT'S YOUR CALL, GUY SMITH.

I... TOLD DEAD GIRL TO STICK WITH HIM... MAKE SURE HE DOESN'T GET INTO TOO MUCH TROUBLE.
GOOD IDEA.
BUT THAT STILL LEAVES THE REST OF THE TEAM.
MYLES. SOBER UP. GOT A JOB TO DO.
SAYS WHO?
SAYS GUY SMITH, WHO IS STILL SUPPOSED TO BE LEADER OF X-STATIX.
BUT SPIKE SAYS THAT'S NOT OUR JOB.
I MEAN... I DON'T MIND RISKING MY DEEPLY TROUBLED AND IRRACINATED NECK FOR THE GLORY OF THE TEAM... BUT NOT SOME PERSONAL OBSESSION OF YOURS...
MYLES IS RIGHT, GUY. LEAVE IT. YOU CAN'T DO EVERYTHING.
I'LL COME WITH YOU, GUY.
YOU'RE GROUNDED UNTIL WE SORT OUT THIS DAMN O'SULLIVAN CONTRACT.
I DON'T CARE ABOUT THAT. I'LL COME WITH YOU.
NO, VENUS. THANKS FOR THE OFFER, BUT...
MAYBE THEY'RE RIGHT. MAYBE I SHOULD JUST FORGET ALL ABOUT ARNIE LUNT...

WE IN O-FORCE ARE ALL SO PROUD AND HONORED TO BE GIVEN THE CHANCE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.
YOU KNOW... THESE ARE TROUBLED TIMES FOR ALL OF US... BUT I SINCERELY BELIEVE THAT OUR GREATEST ENEMY... IS CYNICISM.
THANK YOU, OCEAN...
SHE'S SO RIGHT. STARVATION, AIDS, AND POVERTY JUST PALE INTO INSIGNIFICANCE NEXT TO BAD OLD CYNICISM.
THIS IS A SPECIAL LIVE REPORT FROM CNN. FOLLOWING THE FIRST MISSION OF THE PEOPLE'S FAVORITES, O-FORCE, AS THEY PREPARE TO LIBERATE A LITTLE OF AMERICA...
OVERKILL... WHAT'S THE PLAN?
WE HOPE THAT WHEN ARNIE LUNT SEES WHAT HE'S UP AGAINST, HE'LL GIVE UP WITHOUT A FIGHT.
RIGHT.

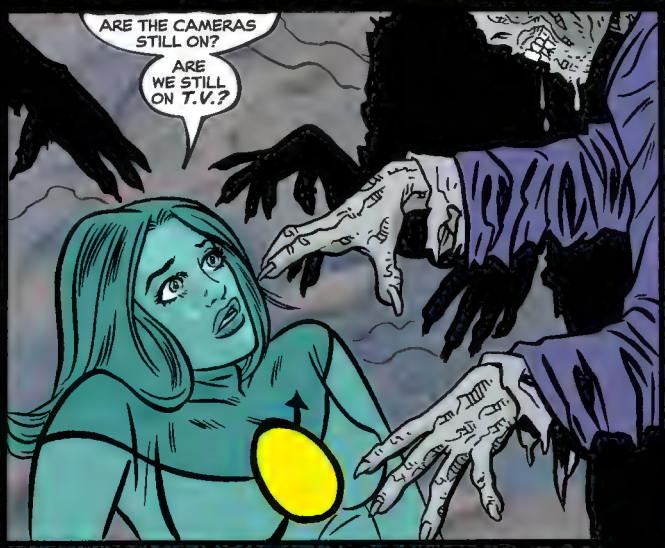

Edie Sawyer Saved My Life
A taped message from lovely X-Force star Edie Sawyer stirred thirteen-year-old Arnie Lunt from a deep coma.
Said Arnie... "I love Edie Sawyer. She's my favorite X-Forcer. Some day I'd like to meet her in person."
I STARE AT THAT STRANGE LOPSIDED FACE AND FEEL A COMPLEX WAVE OF HURT AND LONELINESS AND THE SLOW, PIECE-BY-PIECE CONTAMINATION OF INNOCENCE.
AND NOW I KNOW... I KNOW WHAT THIS IS ABOUT...
IT'S NOT ABOUT DOING GOOD. NOT ABOUT X-STATIX WORKING AS A TEAM. IT'S ABOUT ME.
HE'S CALLING ME.
HE WILL JUDGE ME...
HE WILL DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT I DESERVE TO LIVE, AFTER LETTING EDIE DIE.
HE WILL ANSWER THE QUESTION I HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO ANSWER MYSELF.

GNNN!
KBAMM
OCEAN!
OH MY GOD IT'S A NIGHTMARE! SOME KIND OF UNNATURAL STORM HAS HIT THE TOWN... THERE ARE CREATURES... STRANGE TERRIBLE CREATURES... COMING AT US FROM ALL ANGLES... EXPLODING WHEN THEY GET NEAR ENOUGH...
WHO OR WHAT ARE WE UP AGAINST?

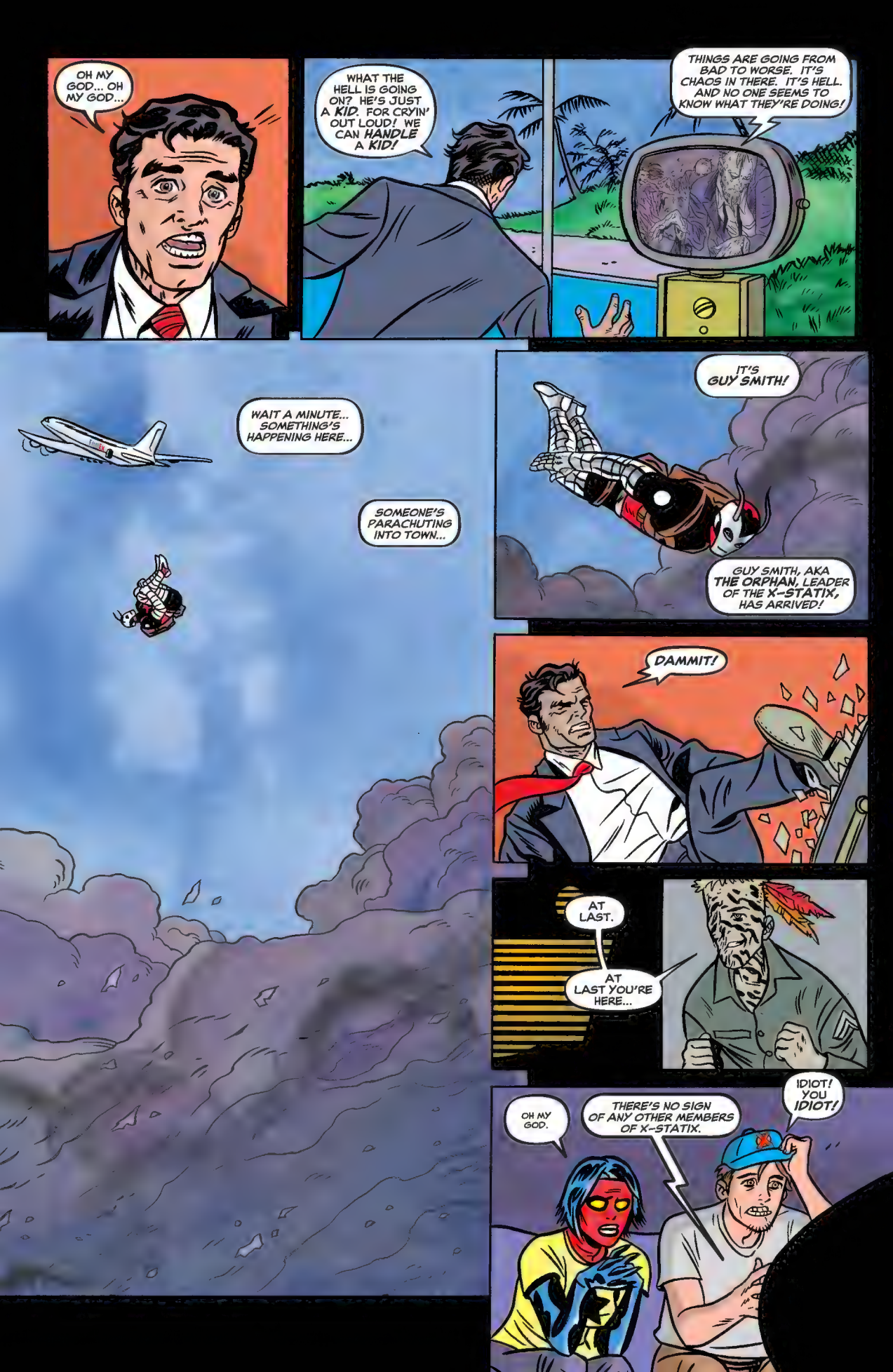
OVERKILL... I CAN'T... I CAN'T FEEL MY LEGS...
YOU'RE... YOU'RE GONNA BE... YOU'RE GONNA BE...

THIS... THIS ISN'T HOW... IT'S SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN, OVERKILL.
THIS ISN'T HOW IT'S SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
DON'T LEAVE ME, OVERKILL!

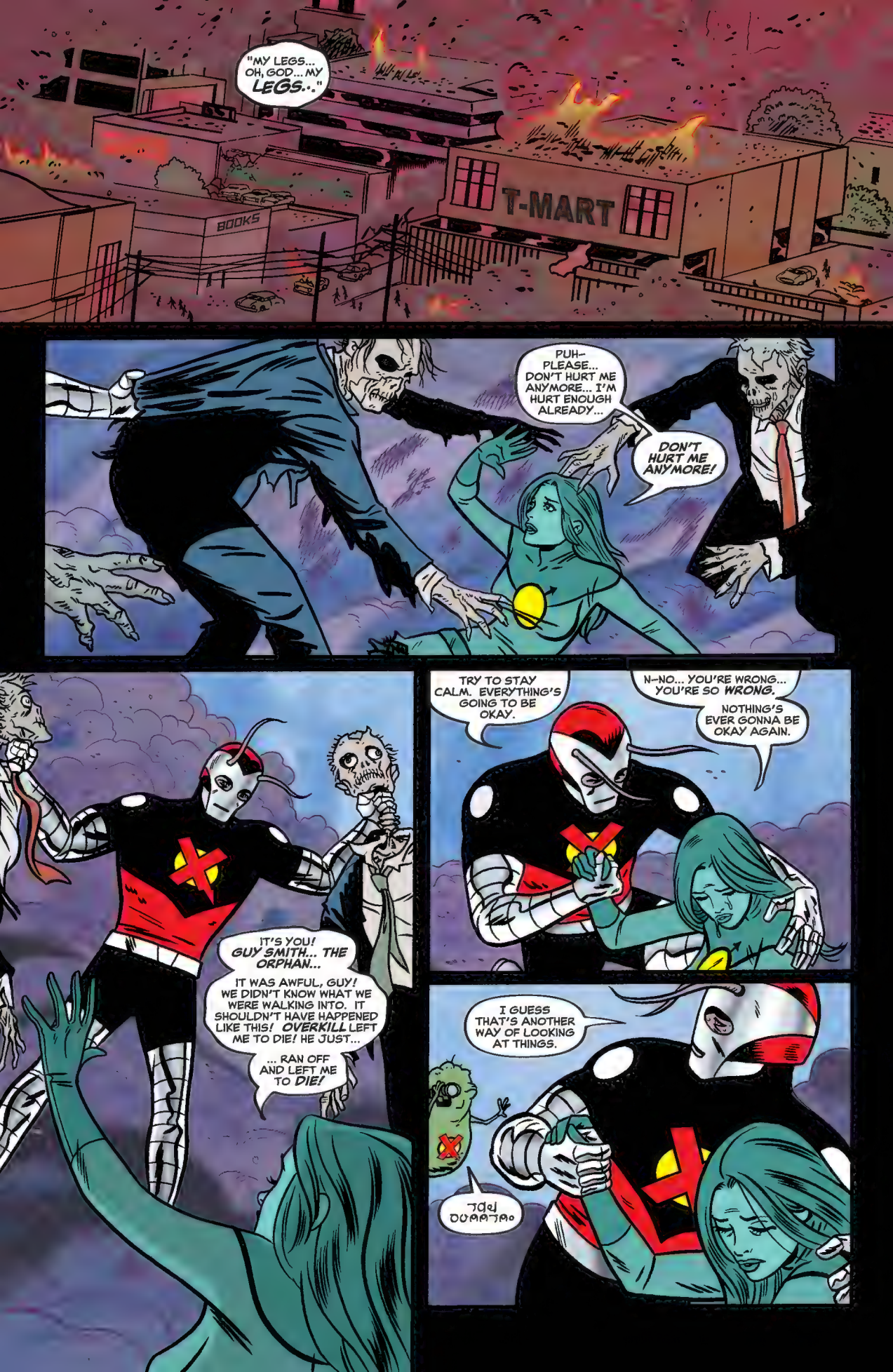

ARE THE CAMERAS STILL ON?
ARE WE STILL ON T.V.?

ARE YOU WATCHING? PLEASE SAY YOU'RE STILL WATCHING! PLEASE...


OH MY GOD... OH MY GOD...
WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON? HE'S JUST A KID. FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD! WE CAN HANDLE A KID!
THINGS ARE GOING FROM BAD TO WORSE. IT'S CHAOS IN THERE. IT'S HELL. AND NO ONE SEEMS TO KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING!
WAIT A MINUTE... SOMETHING'S HAPPENING HERE...
SOMEONE'S PARACHUTING INTO TOWN...
IT'S GUY SMITH!
GUY SMITH, AKA THE ORPHAN, LEADER OF THE X-STATIX, HAS ARRIVED!
DAMMIT!
AT LAST.
AT LAST YOU'RE HERE...
OH MY GOD.
THERE'S NO SIGN OF ANY OTHER MEMBERS OF X-STATIX.
IDIOT! YOU IDIOT!

"NO ANARCHIST, VIVISECTOR, PHAT, DEAD GIRL OR VENUS DEE MILO..."
THE ORPHAN'S GOING IN ON HIS OWN!

X-STATIX #4

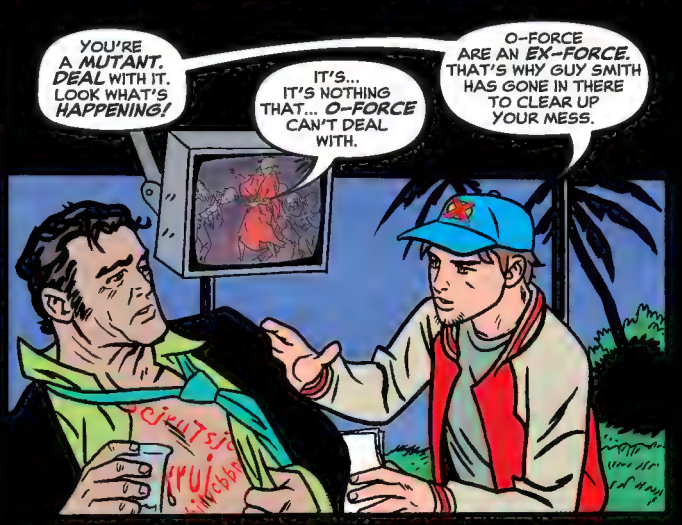

"MY LEGS... OH, GOD... MY LEGS..."
BOOKS
T-MART
PUH-PLEASE... DON'T HURT ME ANYMORE... I'M HURT ENOUGH ALREADY...
DON'T HURT ME ANYMORE!
IT'S YOU! GUY SMITH... THE ORPHAN...
IT WAS AWFUL, GUY! WE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WE WERE WALKING INTO. IT SHOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED LIKE THIS! OVERKILL LEFT ME TO DIE! HE JUST...
... RAN OFF AND LEFT ME TO DIE!
TRY TO STAY CALM. EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE OKAY.
N-NO... YOU'RE WRONG... YOU'RE SO WRONG.
NOTHING'S EVER GONNA BE OKAY AGAIN.
I GUESS THAT'S ANOTHER WAY OF LOOKING AT THINGS.

STILL NO SIGN OF GUY SMITH, WHO PARACHUTED INTO THE EYE OF THIS DEADLY STORM OF DEATH.
AND THE QUESTION EVERYONE'S ASKING -- BESIDES WHO IS THE WINNER OF TONIGHT'S MEGA X-STATIX LOTTERY -- IS...
... WHERE ARE THE REST OF THE TEAM?
"YOU... CAME BACK?"
YEAH.
NO PLACE ELSE TO GO.
HAVE YOU SEEN THIS? DO YOU KNOW THAT GUY IS IN THERE, ALONE?
ANYTHING ON THE OTHER CHANNEL?
NOT LIKE THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN DO TO HELP.
WHAT ABOUT VENUS DEE MILO?

"WHERE'S SHE WHEN GUY NEEDS HER?"
WOW, I FEEL A LITTLE LIGHT-HEADED...
YOU'VE GOT ONE MINUTE, FREEMAN, THEN I'M GOING AFTER GUY, LAWSUIT OR NO LAWSUIT.
Stan Lee Presents,
GOOD OMENS:
PART 4 - TALKING ABOUT EDIE WITH ARNIE
PETER MILLIGAN-STORY MICHAEL ALLRED-ART
LAURA ALLRED-COLORING BLAMBOT'S PIEKOS-LETTERING
JOHN MIESEGRES & WARREN SIMONS-ASST. EDITORS
AXEL ALONSO-EDITOR JOE QUESADA-EDITOR IN CHIEF BILL JEMAS-PRESIDENT
YOU ARE IN BREACH OF OUR CONTRACT WHICH STATES THAT VENUS DEE MILO SHALL NOT TELEPORT FOR ANYONE BUT SOLOMON O'SULLIVAN ENTERPRISES!
GO TO HELL, GINSBERG.
AND TAKE YOUR LOUSY CONTRACT WITH YOU.

O'SULLIVAN, WE NEED TO TALK.
THERE'S NOTHING TO TALK ABOUT.
HOW ABOUT THE MASSACRE THAT'S TAKING PLACE IN MINNESOTA?

LOOK! IT'S SPREADING! THE WORDS! MY SKIN TALK! MY FLESH MESSAGES! SOON I'LL BE COMPLETELY COVERED! WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
WHAT DOES ANY OF IT MEAN?


YOU'RE A MUTANT. DEAL WITH IT. LOOK WHAT'S HAPPENING!
IT'S... IT'S NOTHING THAT... O-FORCE CAN'T DEAL WITH.
O-FORCE ARE AN EX-FORCE. THAT'S WHY GUY SMITH HAS GONE IN THERE TO CLEAR UP YOUR MESS.

SO-- EVERYTHING'S GONNA BE ALL RIGHT?
HE NEEDS HELP. HE NEEDS THE REST OF X-STATIX.
HE NEEDS ME.

THIS OVERRIDES YOUR EXISTING CONTRACT WITH VENUS. SIGN IT AND WE MIGHT JUST BE ABLE TO SAVE WHAT'S LEFT OF YOUR TEAM... AND YOUR CAREER.
DON'T DO IT, SOLOMON.

LOSER.

DON'T LEAVE ME... DON'T YOU LEAVE ME TOO... LIKE OVERKILL...
I'VE GOT TO STOP THIS. BUT I'LL COME BACK.
I'LL COME BACK, OCEAN! I PROMISE!
FIGURES. YOU ALWAYS WERE GOOD AT LEAVING WOMEN TO DIE.
EDIE... I ... I DIDN'T LEAVE YOU...
WHAT KIND OF HERO ARE YOU? WHAT KIND OF MAN ARE YOU?
YOU'RE NOT REAL...
I'M AS REAL AS YOU ARE.
ARNIE... ARNIE IS SO POWERFUL... HE BROUGHT MY BODY BACK DOWN FROM SPACE... HE GAVE ME LIFE AGAIN. I'M BACK, GUY.
EDIE'S BACK...
IS... IS THIS REALLY TRUE?
HE'S OBSESSED WITH ME. HE'D DO ANYTHING FOR ME. GO ON, TOUCH ME. SEE HOW REAL I AM.
SUCKER.
YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT! RUN AWAY! RUN AWAY FROM ME! RUN AWAY FROM THE TRUTH!
ONLY YOU CAN'T RUN AWAY! NOT FROM YOUR GUILTY HEART!

HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE YOUR FRIEND.
CAN'T AFFORD TO HAVE FRIENDS IN THIS GAME.
YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO WALLOW IN SELF-PITY EITHER!
WOAH!
HEY, WHY PICK ON ME? WHAT ABOUT BILLY-BOB WHITE BOY AND MYLES THE WEIRD FUR COAT?
JEEZ, VENUS. I'M THE ANARCHIST. DON'T BELIEVE IN NO HERD INSTINCT. DON'T WANT NO MUTANTS FOLLOWIN' MY BUTT!
IF YOU COME BACK, THEY'LL FOLLOW YOU.
LET ME TELL YOU, VENUS DEE MILO, HE'S FAKING IT. ALL THIS WILD MAN ANARCHIST THING IS A FRONT, AN EASY WAY OUT.
I THOUGHT HE'D OPEN UP TO ME AND I'D SEE THE REAL TIKE. AND HE HAS. AND WHAT DO I SEE?
A SCARED, SELF-DENYING, GUILT-RIDDEN, WASHED-UP EXCUSE FOR A MUTANT.
HE'S NOT EVEN FUN ANYMORE.
HEY, THAT LAST ONE HURT!

KRASSHH
DON'T WANNA HURT YOU, ARNIE.
YOU'RE REALLY HERE. YOU'RE A LITTLE TALLER THAN I'D IMAGINED. OR MAYBE YOU'RE WEARING PLATFORMS. I HEAR A LOT OF YOU STARS WEAR PLATFORMS. TOM CRUISE. CYCLOPS...
THIS HAS GOT TO STOP, ARNIE. PEOPLE ARE REALLY GETTING HURT OUT THERE!
PEOPLE ARE REALLY GETTING HURT IN HERE!
I'M SORRY, ARNIE... I TOLD THE GENTLEMAN YOU WEREN'T TO BE DISTURBED IN YOUR ROOM.
S'OKAY, MOM. I CAN TAKE CARE OF THIS.
THIS ONE'S FOR EDIE.
YOU SHOULDA TAKEN BETTER CARE OF HER.

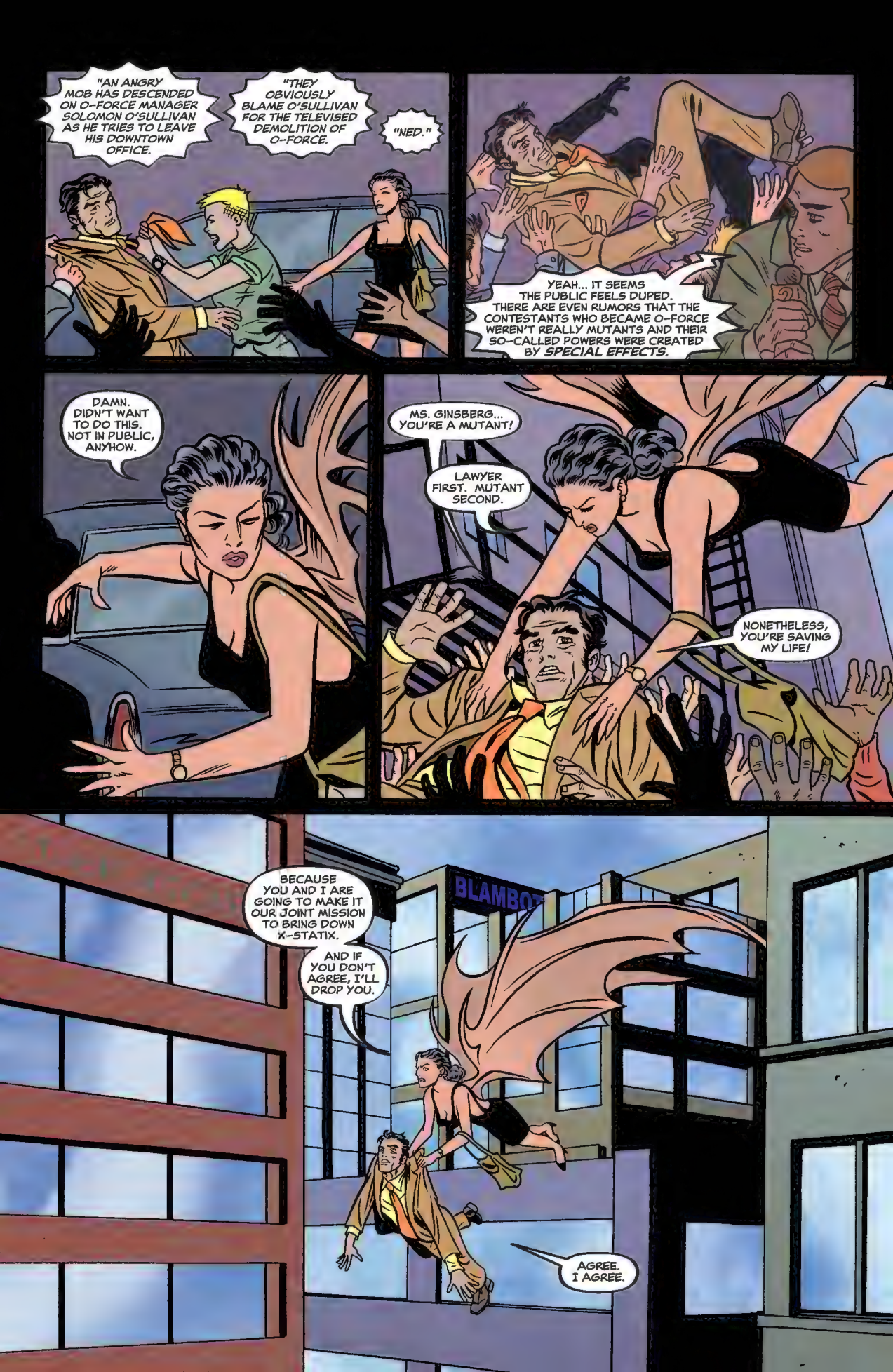
IS THIS WHAT I CAME HERE FOR? PAIN? JUDGEMENT?
THE DEATH PENALTY... NOT HANDED DOWN FROM THE INDIFFERENT OFFICE OF A COLD GUN BUT FROM ARNIE...
GHNN...
... THE PROSECUTION, ACTING ON BEHALF OF EDIE SAWYER, DECEASED.
AND WHO ARE YOU?
MY JURY?
I'M NATHAN MALLOY, BORN EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-EIGHT, DEAD NINETEEN ELEVEN.
I'M BUD CORBY. BORN THIRTY-TWO, DIED SEVENTY THREE.
WE AIN'T HERE FOR INTRODUCTIONS. WE'RE HERE TO MAKE YOU ONE OF US.
THEY ARE DEAD, BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE.
MY GOD, FOR A MOMENT THE THOUGHT HITS:
COULD ARNIE REALLY DO IT?
COULD HE REALLY BRING EDIE BACK TO LIFE?

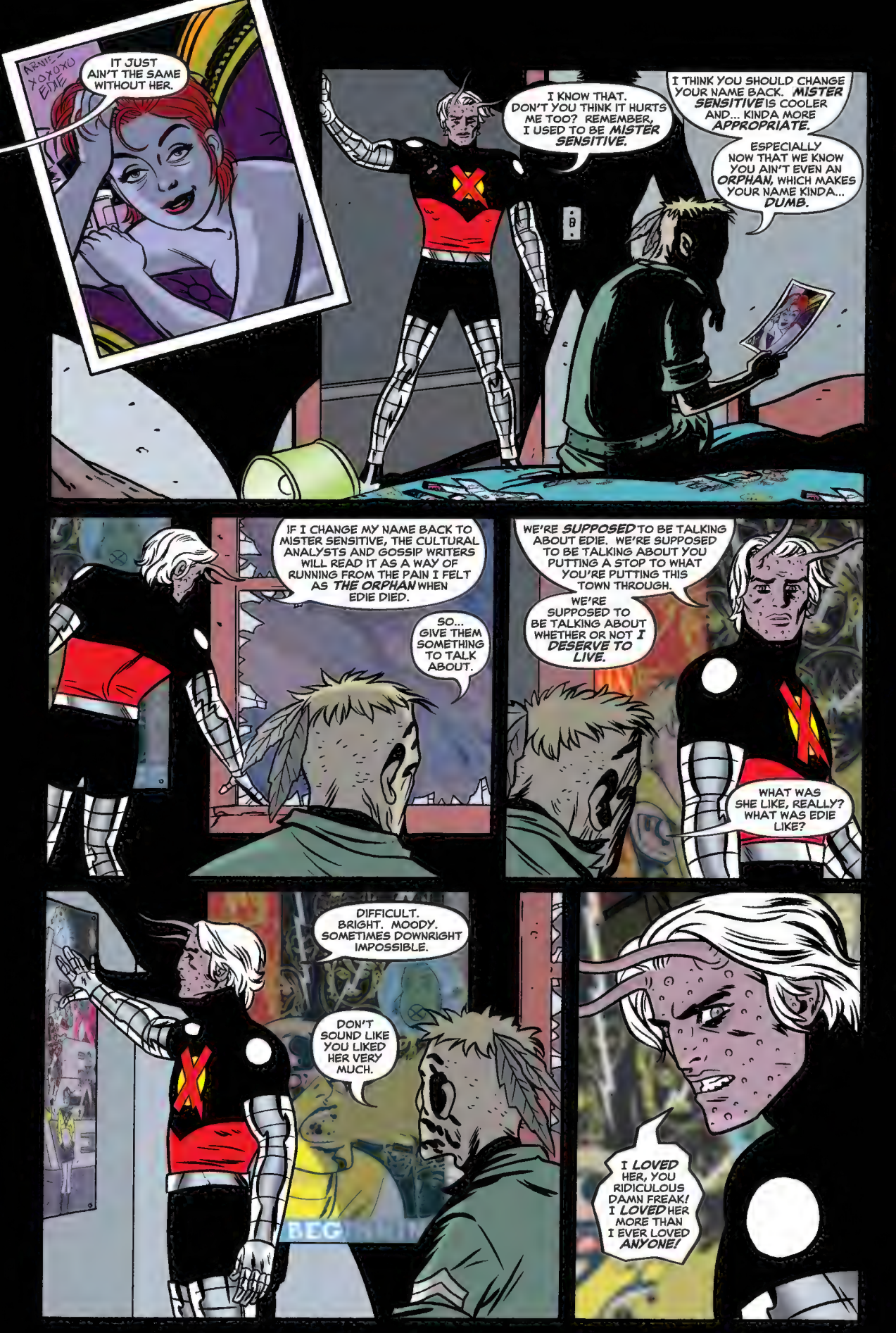
NO. MADNESS.
THIS ISN'T LIFE.
THESE ARE NOTHING BUT BONE PUPPETS, ROTTEN MEAT MANNEQUINS...
ANIMATED BY ARNIE'S SICK MIND.
!@#$!, WHAT A WAY TO GO.
SMILE, YOU'RE ON CAMERA!
JEEZ!
VENUS... YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE COME HERE ALONE... IT'S TOO DANGEROUS...

WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT *ALONE?*
ALL THESE DEAD PEOPLE RUNNING AROUND. IT REALLY *DEVALUES* THE *CURRENCY.*

BILLY-BOB! YOU'VE GOT YOUR *PHAT* BACK!
ME AND MY HOMIE, MYLES HAD A RAP, NOW EVERYTHIN' COOL.
GRRR!
HE MEANS WE DISCUSSED OUR SEXUALITY. BILLY-BOB AND I CAME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT WE WERE *BOTH* HOMOSEXUAL.
THEY WENT ON LIVE TV AND *SAID* AS MUCH.
MARKETING IS ALREADY SEEING AN UPSWING IN OUR PINK DOLLAR MERCHANDISE SALES.
gaggo
orago
BUT WHAT WE REALIZED... AFTER OUR INITIAL MISTAKE... WAS THAT THOUGH WE'RE BOTH *GAY* WE ARE NOT IN FACT ATTRACTED TO *EACH OTHER*.
1316

WORD! I'M MORE INTO BRUTHAS.
SURPRISE.
WHILE I HANKER AFTER SOMEONE MORE INTELLECTUALLY CHALLENGING.
YOU SAYIN' I'M DUMB, WHITE BOY?
STOP BEING SO MELODRAMATIC. WE'RE IN A PASTICHE OF A ZOMBIE MOVIE, NOT SOME PREPUBESCENT SOAP.
MAYBE THE MUTANT TEAM WHO ARGUES TOGETHER, STICKS TOGETHER.
NOW YOU EVACUATE CIVILIANS AND THOSE RIDICULOUS AMATEURS FROM THE O-FORCE.
WHAT NOW?
WHAT 'BOUT YOU, MAN?
I'M GOING TO SEE ARNIE AGAIN.
WE'VE STILL GOT SOME ISSUES.


"AN ANGRY MOB HAS DESCENDED ON O-FORCE MANAGER SOLOMON O'SULLIVAN AS HE TRIES TO LEAVE HIS DOWNTOWN OFFICE.
"THEY OBVIOUSLY BLAME O'SULLIVAN FOR THE TELEVISED DEMOLITION OF O-FORCE.
"NED."
YEAH... IT SEEMS THE PUBLIC FEELS DUPED. THERE ARE EVEN RUMORS THAT THE CONTESTANTS WHO BECAME O-FORCE WEREN'T REALLY MUTANTS AND THEIR SO-CALLED POWERS WERE CREATED BY SPECIAL EFFECTS.
DAMN. DIDN'T WANT TO DO THIS. NOT IN PUBLIC, ANYHOW.
MS. GINSBERG... YOU'RE A MUTANT!
LAWYER FIRST. MUTANT SECOND.
NONETHELESS, YOU'RE SAVING MY LIFE!
BECAUSE YOU AND I ARE GOING TO MAKE IT OUR JOINT MISSION TO BRING DOWN X-STATIX.
AND IF YOU DON'T AGREE, I'LL DROP YOU.
AGREE. I AGREE.


ARNIE— XOXOXO EDIE
IT JUST AIN'T THE SAME WITHOUT HER.
I KNOW THAT. DON'T YOU THINK IT HURTS ME TOO? REMEMBER, I USED TO BE MISTER SENSITIVE.
I THINK YOU SHOULD CHANGE YOUR NAME BACK. MISTER SENSITIVE IS COOLER AND... KINDA MORE APPROPRIATE.
ESPECIALLY NOW THAT WE KNOW YOU AIN'T EVEN AN ORPHAN, WHICH MAKES YOUR NAME KINDA... DUMB.
IF I CHANGE MY NAME BACK TO MISTER SENSITIVE, THE CULTURAL ANALYSTS AND GOSSIP WRITERS WILL READ IT AS A WAY OF RUNNING FROM THE PAIN I FELT AS THE ORPHAN WHEN EDIE DIED.
SO... GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT.
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE TALKING ABOUT EDIE. WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE TALKING ABOUT YOU PUTTING A STOP TO WHAT YOU'RE PUTTING THIS TOWN THROUGH.
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE TALKING ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT I DESERVE TO LIVE.
WHAT WAS SHE LIKE, REALLY? WHAT WAS EDIE LIKE?
DIFFICULT. BRIGHT. MOODY. SOMETIMES DOWNRIGHT IMPOSSIBLE.
DON'T SOUND LIKE YOU LIKED HER VERY MUCH.
I LOVED HER, YOU RIDICULOUS DAMN FREAK! I LOVED HER MORE THAN I EVER LOVED ANYONE!

NOT AS MUCH AS I LOVED HER.
YOU NEVER EVEN MET HER!
YOU DON'T NEED TO MEET SOMEONE TO LOVE THEM. EVER HEARD OF INTERNET ROMANCE?
AND IF YOU CALL ME A FREAK AGAIN I'LL MAKE YOUR SKIN PEEL OFF AND YOUR MUSCLES SCAB OVER AND YOUR EYES TURN TO RUNNY EGGS.
FREAK. FREAK. FREAK.
AHHH...
THAT'S NOT NICE. THAT'S REALLY NOT... NICE...
IT'S ONLY BECAUSE YOU'RE FAMOUS AND YOU'RE LEADER OF WHAT USED TO BE MY FAVORITE SUPER HERO TEAM THAT I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU ANOTHER CHANCE TO BE NICE.
NICE?
I COULD KILL YOU RIGHT NOW. ONE SQUEEZE AND...
... AND I'LL MAKE SURE I EXPLODE LIKE A BOMB AND TAKE YOU WITH ME.
IF YOU THINK I'M THAT BAD... THAT I POSE THAT MUCH OF A THREAT TO HUMANITY... YOU SHOULD BE WILLING TO DIE TO STOP ME.
ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU PEOPLE DO? DIE IN THE LINE OF DUTY? GO ON... LET'S SEE HOW MUCH OF A HERO YOU REALLY ARE, MISTER SENSITIVE.

GUY MUST BE GETTING ON REALLY WELL WITH ARNIE. AT LEAST, HE SEEMS TO BE KEEPING HIM PREOCCUPIED.
LET'S GET THESE PEOPLE OUTTA HERE BEFORE HE GETS RE-OCCUPIED.
STOP
ROAD CLOSED
WITH ANY LUCK WE'LL MAKE THE EVENING NEWS!
12
AHH-EHMM.
MILK AND COOKIES?

MOM!
WE'RE JUST ON THE POINT OF DECIDING WHETHER OR NOT TO KILL EACH OTHER!
WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO DO SOMETHING SO SILLY?
GOOD POINT.
WE'RE NOT X-FORCE. WE DON'T HAVE EDIE SAWYER. WE DON'T HAVE ZEITGEIST OR BLOKE OR ANY OF THE OTHERS WHO HAVE DIED IN THIS TEAM.
BUT MAYBE WE DESERVE A CHANCE.
MAYBE WE ALL DESERVE A CHANCE.

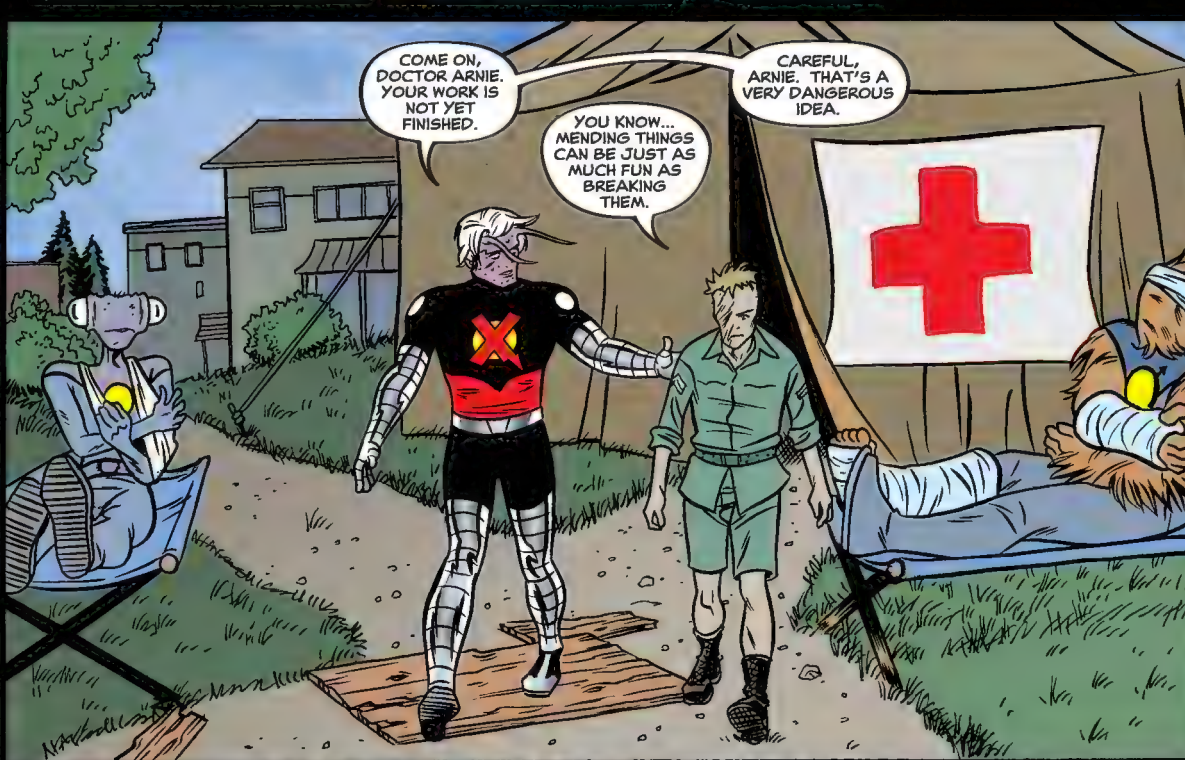
AIIEEE!

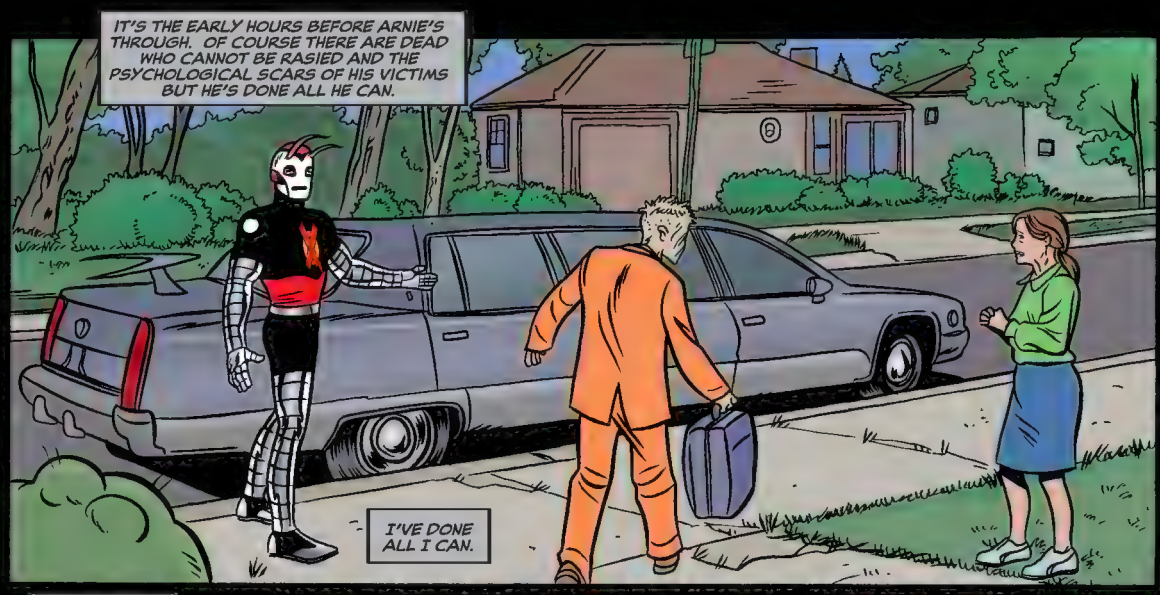
FIBERS FUSING, ATROPHIED TISSUE STIRRING LAZARUS-LIKE.
DOES THIS KID HAVE ANY IDEA JUST HOW MIND-SHATTERINGLY POWERFUL HE IS?

DOES HE KNOW THE LIMIT OF HIS POWERS?
AND IS HE AWARE OF THAT LITTLE PROBLEM HE HAS, THE ONE I PICKED UP ON BACK IN HIS BEDROOM?

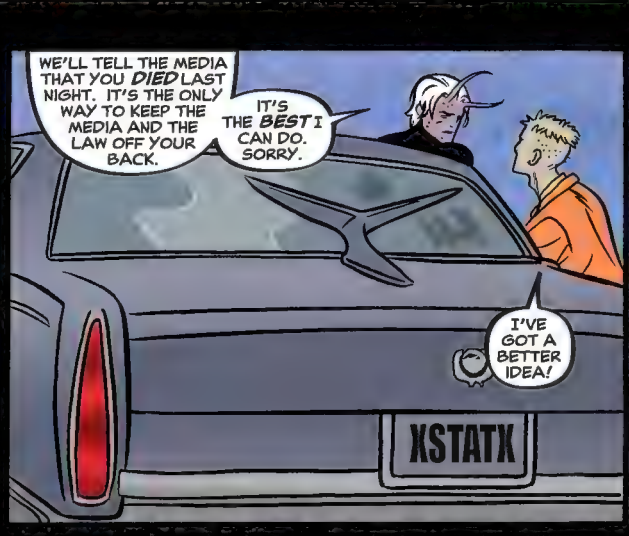
WE SHALL SEE.
I CAN FEEL MY LEGS! IT'S LIKE NOTHING HAPPENED TO THEM!
WHEN YOU LEFT ME, I THOUGHT YOU WERE A COWARDLY JERK LIKE OVERKILL. I THOUGHT ALL MEN WERE COWARDLY JERKS. BUT YOU WERE RIGHT ALL ALONG.
EVERYTHING IS GONNA BE OKAY!

YEAH.


COME ON, DOCTOR ARNIE. YOUR WORK IS NOT YET FINISHED.
YOU KNOW... MENDING THINGS CAN BE JUST AS MUCH FUN AS BREAKING THEM.
CAREFUL, ARNIE. THAT'S A VERY DANGEROUS IDEA.


IT'S THE EARLY HOURS BEFORE ARNIE'S THROUGH. OF COURSE THERE ARE DEAD WHO CANNOT BE RASIED AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SCARS OF HIS VICTIMS BUT HE'S DONE ALL HE CAN.
I'VE DONE ALL I CAN.

NOW ALL I WANT IS NEVER TO SEE THAT SAD, RUINED FACE AGAIN.
PROFESSOR XAVIER IS EXPECTING YOU. HE'LL BE ABLE TO HELP YOU. HE HAS HELPED MANY OF US IN THE PAST.
NOW SAY GOOD-BYE TO YOUR MOTHER.
GOOD-BYE?


WE'LL TELL THE MEDIA THAT YOU DIED LAST NIGHT. IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP THE MEDIA AND THE LAW OFF YOUR BACK.
IT'S THE BEST I CAN DO. SORRY.
I'VE GOT A BETTER IDEA!
XSTATX

WHATEVER IT IS, THE ANSWER'S NO...
I SAID I GOT A BETTER IDEA. AND I KNOW YOU WON'T WANNA GET ME MAD BY NOT LIKING IT.
RIGHT, MISTER SENSITIVE?

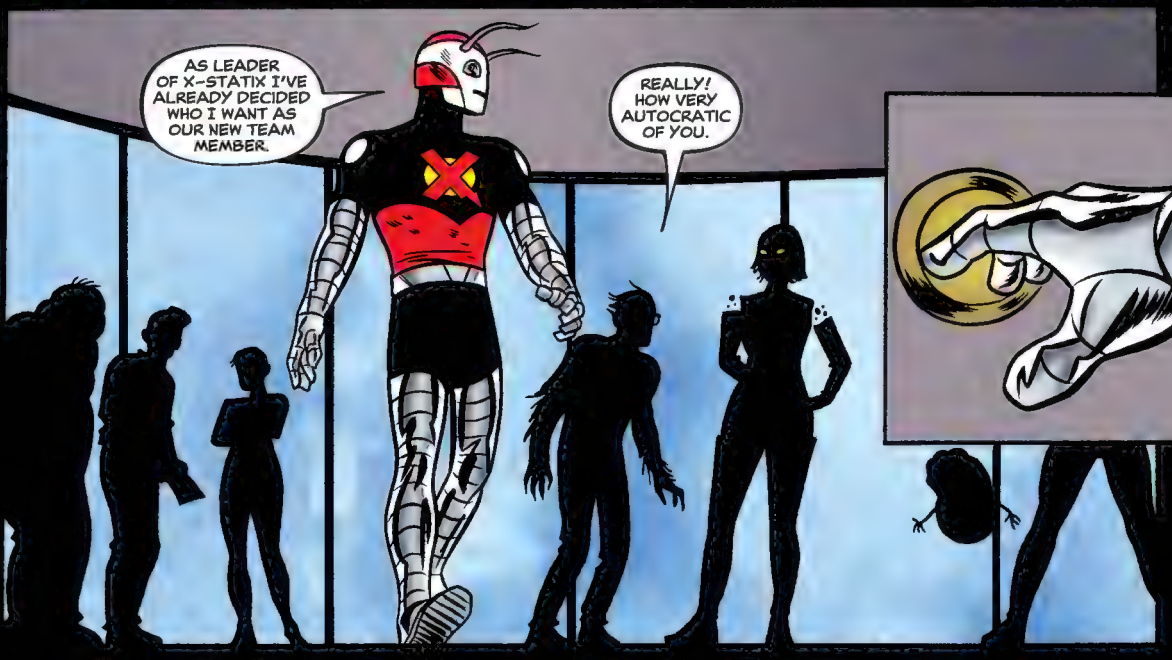
WELL... LOOKS LKE THEY LOVE US AGAIN.
IN A FUNNY WAY, O-FORCE WAS THE BEST THING THAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO US.
IT'S ALWAYS DIFFICULT, STARTING AGAIN WITH A NEW NAME, ESPECIALLY WITHOUT YOUR MOST POPULAR TEAM MEMBER.
BUT HAVING O-FORCE AROUND MEANT THE PUBLIC COULD COMPARE US -- OUR SUBSTANCE AND DIGNITY -- TO A SYNTHETIC, JUST-ADD-WATER KINDA OUTFIT.
IT'S ALMOST AS THOUGH YOU PLANNED ALL THIS TO HAPPEN.
COME ON... THAT'D MAKE ME SOME KINDA MANIPULATIVE MASTERMIND.

EVERYONE... I KNOW HOW TOUGH THINGS HAVE BEEN. HOW WEIRD AND TOUGH. SO I WANT TO THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING THROUGH FOR ME.

IT'S VENUS YOU SHOULD THANK. SHE PRETTY MUCH THREATENED AND BULLIED US ALL INTO BEING A TEAM AGAIN.

AN' THE ONLY REASON I SAVED YOUR BUTT WAS TO PROVE I WAS STILL "FUN".
TALKING OF TEAM... WE GOTTA CHOOSE A NEW MEMBER FOR X-STATIX.
AS IF YOU NEED TO PROVE ANYTHING TO ANYONE.

WAIT. I'VE GOT SOMETHING TO SAY ON THAT SUBJECT.
I'VE HAD SOME FOCUS GROUPS CANVASSING OPINION AS TO WHAT KIND OF MUTANT WOULD PROVE MOST POPULAR...

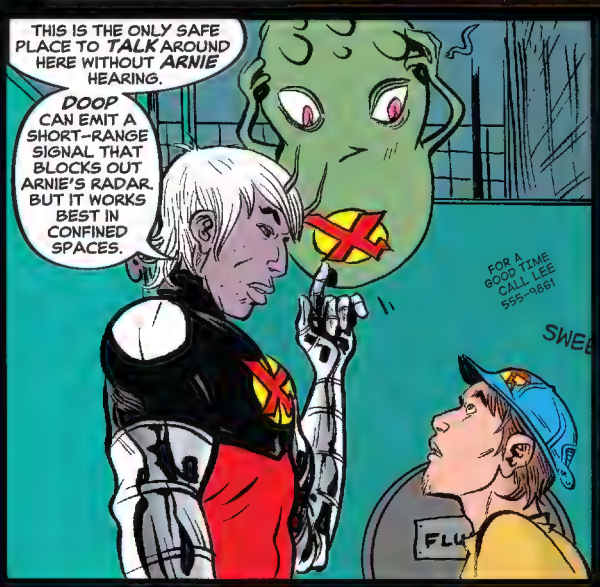

AS LEADER OF X-STATIX I'VE ALREADY DECIDED WHO I WANT AS OUR NEW TEAM MEMBER.
REALLY! HOW VERY AUTOCRATIC OF YOU.

ROAD CLOSED
ARNIE... SAY HELLO TO YOUR TEAMMATES.
FELLAS... THIS IS ARNIE.

X-STATIX #5

GUY, YOU KNOW I LIKE YOU AS A FRIEND, AND RESPECT YOU AS A TEAM LEADER.
BUT I WANT YOU TO CONSIDER WHAT I'M GONNA ASK YOU VERY CAREFULLY... BECAUSE YOUR ANSWER COULD HAVE A LONG-LASTING EFFECT ON OUR RELATIONSHIP.

WHY ARE WE IN THE JOHN TOGETHER?


THIS IS THE ONLY SAFE PLACE TO TALK AROUND HERE WITHOUT ARNIE HEARING.
DOOP CAN EMIT A SHORT-RANGE SIGNAL THAT BLOCKS OUT ARNIE'S RADAR. BUT IT WORKS BEST IN CONFINED SPACES.
FOR A GOOD TIME CALL LEE 555-9861

NOTHING TO TALK ABOUT. I DO NOT WANT THAT LITTLE MONSTER ON OUR TEAM. HE'S A KILLER.
HE'S HIGHLY UNSTABLE, AND UNTIL I FIND OUT THE FULL EXTENT OF HIS POWERS WE'VE GOT TO PLAY ALONG WITH HIM.

WHAT ARE THE MEDIA GONNA SAY WHEN THEY LEARN THAT X-STATIX HAS RECRUITED A MURDERER?!
I'VE GOT A GREAT IDEA... IT'S SO OUT THERE, IT JUST MIGHT WORK...

...WE FIX HIM UP WITH A COSTUME AND A MASK...
...AND WE KEEP HIS TRUE IDENTITY A SECRET.

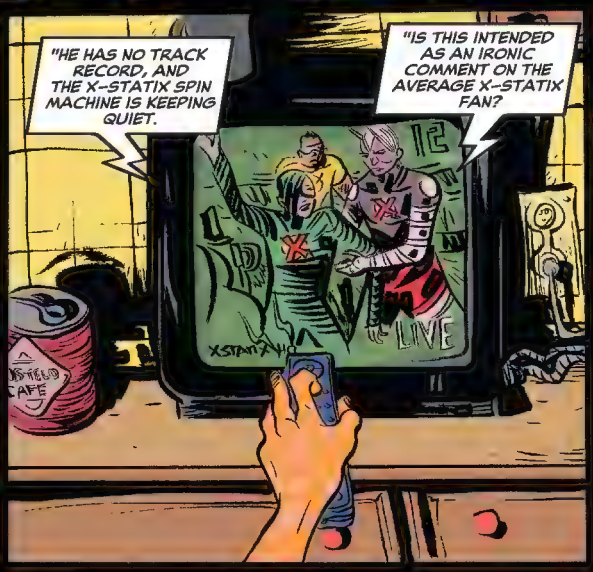
STAN LEE PRESENTS

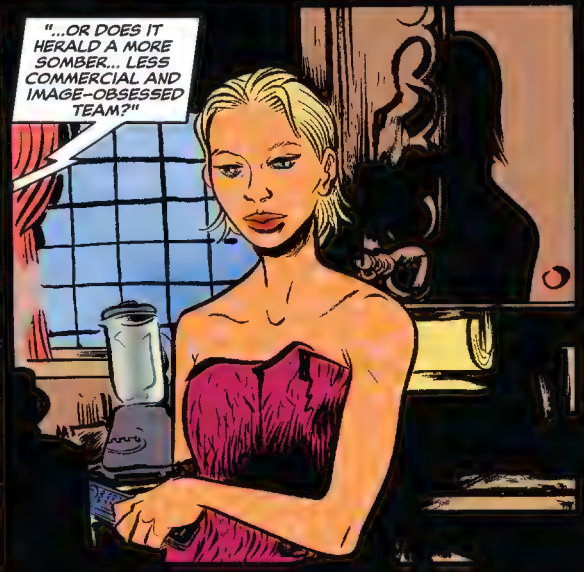
GOOD OMENS: PART 5 OF 5 THE MYSTERIOUS FAN BOY!

"FRESH FROM THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF ITS LATEST MISSION, X-STATIX REVEALS ITS NEWEST RECRUIT...

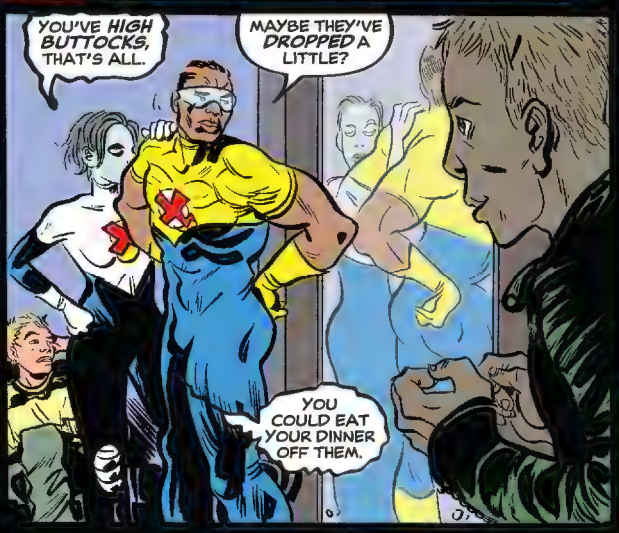
Peter Milligan WRITER • Paul Pope ARTIST

Laura Allred COLORIST • Blambot's Piekos LETTERER • John Miesegaes & Warren Simons ASSISTANT EDITORS • Axel Alonso EDITOR • Joe Quesada CHIEF • Bill Jemas PRESIDENT





DOES MY BUTT LOOK BIG IN THIS?


YOU'VE HIGH BUTTOCKS, THAT'S ALL.
MAYBE THEY'VE DROPPED A LITTLE?
YOU COULD EAT YOUR DINNER OFF THEM.

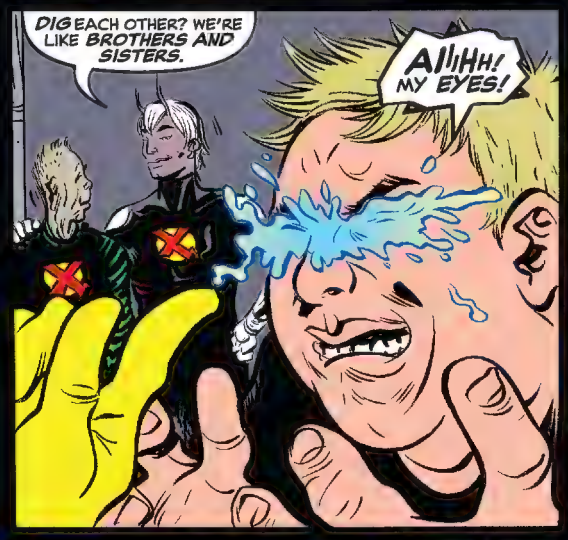
YOU WILL HAVE NOTICED, "MYSTERIOUS FAN BOY," THE LEVEL OF DISCOURSE HERE TENDS TO BE FAIRLY LOFTY...
THE ANARCHIST ISN'T, LIKE, VAIN?

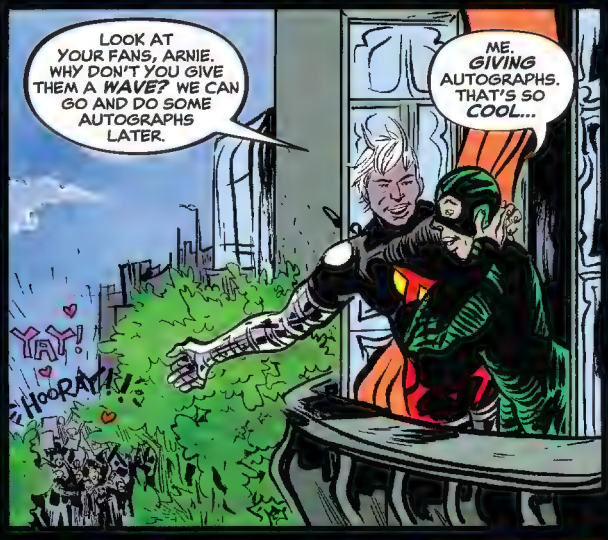
YOU KIDDIN'? THIS AIN'T ABOUT VANITY, MAN! THIS'S ABOUT MY SWEAT-THANG! MY MUTANT POWERS ARE LINKED TO THE MUSCLES IN MY BUTT.
GOIN' BY THE STUFF HE SAYS, SO IS HIS MOUTH.

ZPRTT
SO WHAT'S THAT SAY TO YOU, MILK BOY?

THEY'RE FIGHTING! THEY'RE FIGHTING EACH OTHER!
THAT ISN'T FIGHTING, ARNIE! THAT ISN'T REAL.

WE DO THIS TO KEEP OURSELVES RAZOR SHARP. IT'S LIKE... PLAY, WITH A DEADLY PURPOSE.
SO... YOU ALL DIG EACH OTHER REALLY? YOU'RE ONE TIGHT-KNIT TEAM?

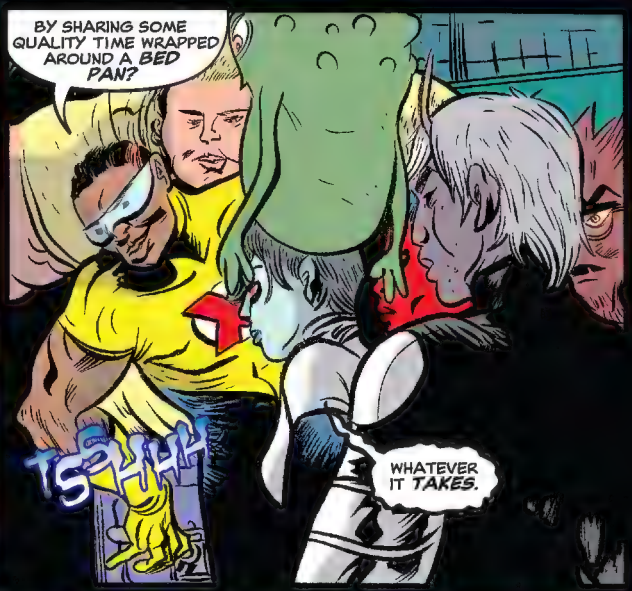

DIG EACH OTHER? WE'RE LIKE BROTHERS AND SISTERS.
AIIIHH! MY EYES!


LOOK AT YOUR FANS, ARNIE. WHY DON'T YOU GIVE THEM A WAVE? WE CAN GO AND DO SOME AUTOGRAPHS LATER.
ME. GIVING AUTOGRAPHS. THAT'S SO COOL...
YAY!
HOORAY!!

WOW. THEY REALLY LOVE US...
GLUG
GLUG

THEY DON'T LOVE US... THEY HATE US. THEY ENVY US. THEY FEAR US. THEY PUT US ON A PEDESTAL SO THEY DON'T HAVE TO LIVE ALONGSIDE US.
BUT THEY CAN'T WAIT FOR US TO FALL OFF AND CRACK OUR MUTOID CRANIUMS WIDE OPEN.
I DON'T LIKE THIS. THIS IS NOT WHAT I WANTED THE TEAM TO BE.
I'VE NEVER BEEN IN A TEAM BEFORE AND THIS IS STARTING TO BE A BIG DISAPPOINTMENT.
... STARTING TO LOOK LIKE THE RUMORS ABOUT YOU BEING SPOILED, SQUABBLING, EGO-DRIVEN MUTANTS ARE TRUE...
FEEL MY THROAT CLOSING. ESOPHAGUS HEALING UP. HE'S GOING TO KILL US ALL... ANY SECOND NOW...
GOT TO... GOT TO... THINK OF SOMETHING...
WHY DON'T...
WHY DON'T WE ALL... GO OUT...
FOR LUNCH.
LUNCH? ALL OF US TOGETHER?
YOU MEAN... LIKE... SOMEWHERE ...TRENDY?

THE KID'S BEEN AN OUTSIDER ALL HIS LIFE. PICKED ON. BULLIED. EVERYTHING. AND NOW HE'S FINALLY PART OF A TEAM -- SO WE'D BETTER START ACTING LIKE ONE!


BY SHARING SOME QUALITY TIME WRAPPED AROUND A BED PAN?
TSHH
WHATEVER IT TAKES.

WHY DON'T I 'PORT HIM SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY AND DUMP HIM THERE?
COMING FROM THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AND PERFECT GODDESS IN THE WORLD, THAT'S REALLY QUITE EVIL.
DROP DEAD.

KNOCK IT OFF! THAT'S JUST THE KIND OF TESTY EXCHANGE I'M TALKING ABOUT!
THANKS FOR THE OFFER, VENUS... BUT WE CAN'T DUMP ARNIE. HE'S OUR PROBLEM.

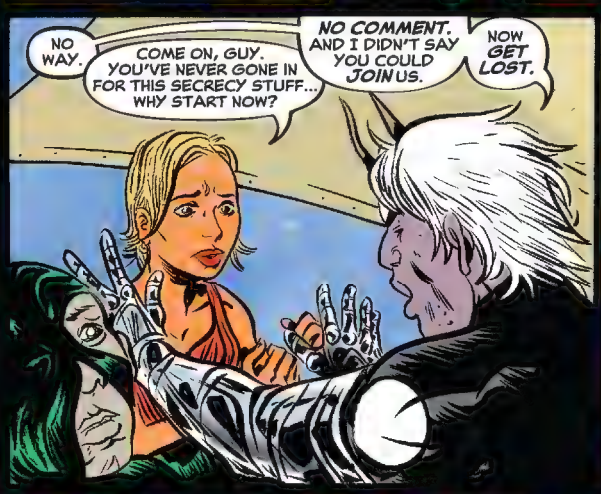
YOU MEAN... HE'S YOUR PROBLEM.
WHICH MAKES HIM YOUR PROBLEM, ALICAR.

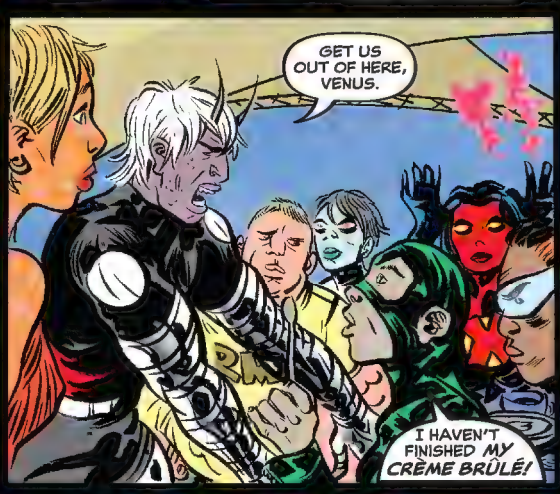
WE'RE A DAMN TEAM. WE'D DIE FOR EACH OTHER. WE LIKE NOTHING BETTER THAN TO SPEND OUR HARD-EARNED DOWN TIME TOGETHER.
ANYONE GOT A PROBLEM WITH THAT... AND I'LL BREAK THEIR NECKS!

WELCOME TO THE CHIMPANZEES' TEA PARTY.
WOW! THAT'S JULIA ROBERTS!
I DIDN'T KNOW STARS LIKE HER HAGGLED OVER THEIR CHECK!
DO YOU KNOW THAT CHIMPANZEES HAVE TO BE TRAINED TO BE NAUGHTY AND THROW THEIR FOOD?
MAYBE I COULD ASK HER FOR... A DATE.
THE MORE YOU GOT, THE LESS YOU LIKE TO GIVE.
YOU'RE X-STATIX NOW, DUDE. YOU DATE ANYONE YOU WANT.
UNLIKE MY TEAM OF PRIMATES...
I WISH.
HE'S CALMING DOWN, I CAN FEEL IT. HE'S SO INTO BEING HERE WITH US THAT HIS RADAR IS LOWERED...
SO WHY DON'T WE JUMP HIM RIGHT NOW?
THAT'S NOT THE WAY.
THE WAY? WHO THE HELL ARE YOU ALL OF A SUDDEN? OBI-FREAKIN'-KENOBI?
MAY I JOIN YOU?

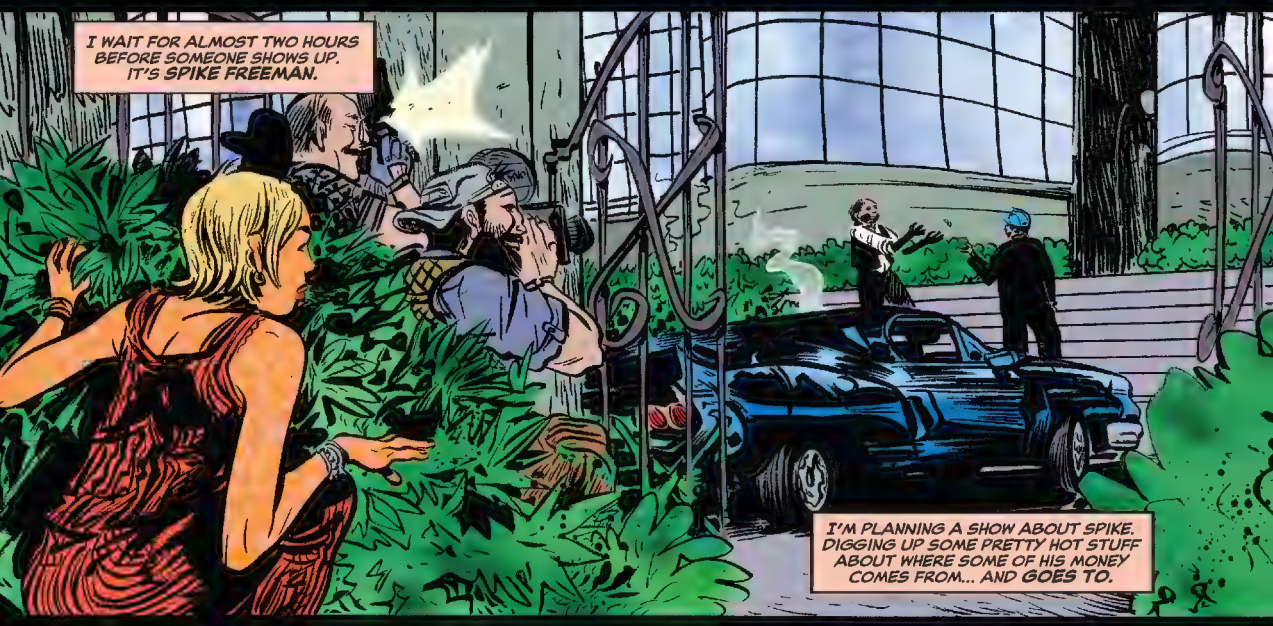
WHOA! UNREAL! LACUNA! YOU'RE LIKE... YOU'RE A BABE!
I MEAN...

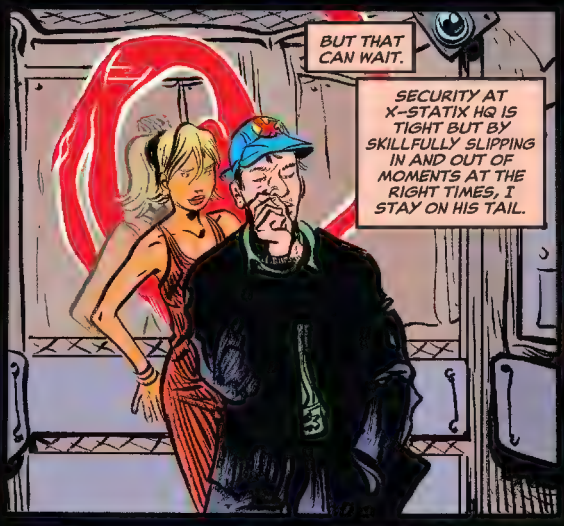
POOR KID. I CAN FEEL HIM BLUSHING UNDER HIS SPANDEX.
SAY, MYSTERIOUS FAN BOY... HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO APPEAR ON MY SHOW...?
"LACUNA AND THE STARS?" Y-YOU BET!
WE CAN PUBLICIZE IT AS THE FORUM FOR YOU REVEALING YOUR TRUE IDENTITY.

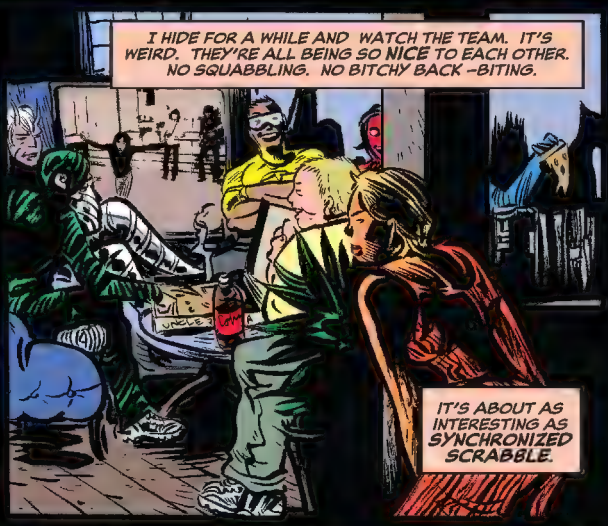

NO WAY.
COME ON, GUY. YOU'VE NEVER GONE IN FOR THIS SECRECY STUFF... WHY START NOW?
NO COMMENT. AND I DIDN'T SAY YOU COULD JOIN US.
NOW GET LOST.


GET US OUT OF HERE, VENUS.
I HAVEN'T FINISHED MY CRÈME BRÛLÉ!

YOU'RE IN X-STATIX NOW.
THESE ARE THE KIND OF SACRIFICES YOU HAVE TO MAKE.

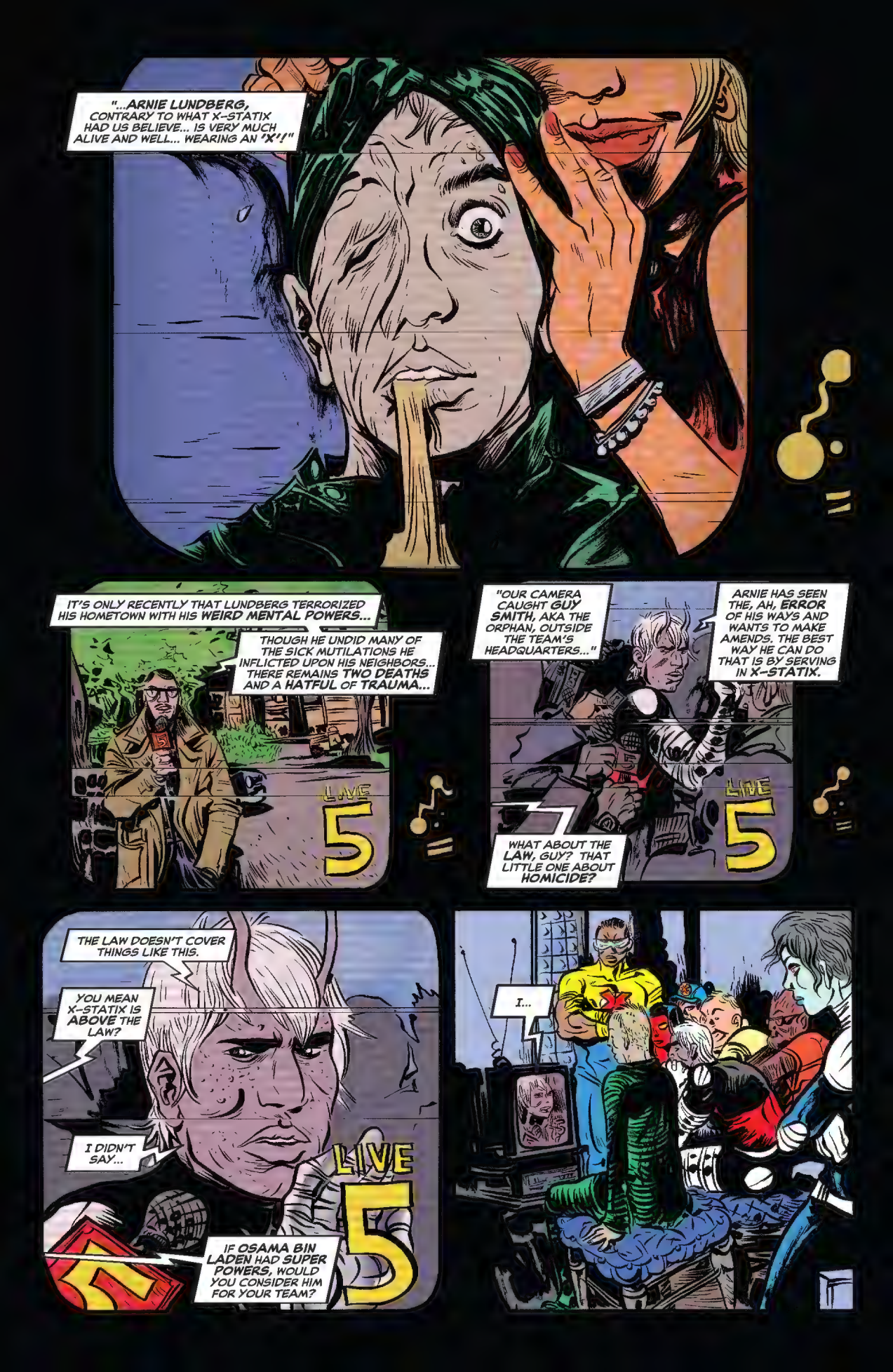

I WAIT FOR ALMOST TWO HOURS BEFORE SOMEONE SHOWS UP. IT'S SPIKE FREEMAN.
I'M PLANNING A SHOW ABOUT SPIKE. DIGGING UP SOME PRETTY HOT STUFF ABOUT WHERE SOME OF HIS MONEY COMES FROM... AND GOES TO.


BUT THAT CAN WAIT.
SECURITY AT X-STATIX HQ IS TIGHT BUT BY SKILLFULLY SLIPPING IN AND OUT OF MOMENTS AT THE RIGHT TIMES, I STAY ON HIS TAIL.


I HIDE FOR A WHILE AND WATCH THE TEAM. IT'S WEIRD. THEY'RE ALL BEING SO NICE TO EACH OTHER. NO SQUABBLING. NO BITCHY BACK-BITING.
IT'S ABOUT AS INTERESTING AS SYNCHRONIZED SCRABBLE.

SO I STOP THE CLOCK AND DO WHAT I CAME HERE TO DO.

WHY SO MYSTERIOUS, FAN BOY?


"...ARNIE LUNDBERG, CONTRARY TO WHAT X-STATIX HAD US BELIEVE... IS VERY MUCH ALIVE AND WELL... WEARING AN 'X'!"
IT'S ONLY RECENTLY THAT LUNDBERG TERRORIZED HIS HOMETOWN WITH HIS WEIRD MENTAL POWERS...
THOUGH HE UNDID MANY OF THE SICK MUTILATIONS HE INFLICTED UPON HIS NEIGHBORS... THERE REMAINS TWO DEATHS AND A HATFUL OF TRAUMA...
LIVE 5
"OUR CAMERA CAUGHT GUY SMITH, AKA THE ORPHAN, OUTSIDE THE TEAM'S HEADQUARTERS..."
ARNIE HAS SEEN THE, AH, ERROR OF HIS WAYS AND WANTS TO MAKE AMENDS. THE BEST WAY HE CAN DO THAT IS BY SERVING IN X-STATIX.
WHAT ABOUT THE LAW, GUY? THAT LITTLE ONE ABOUT HOMICIDE?
LIVE 5
THE LAW DOESN'T COVER THINGS LIKE THIS.
YOU MEAN X-STATIX IS ABOVE THE LAW?
I DIDN'T SAY...
IF OSAMA BIN LADEN HAD SUPER POWERS, WOULD YOU CONSIDER HIM FOR YOUR TEAM?
LIVE 5
I...

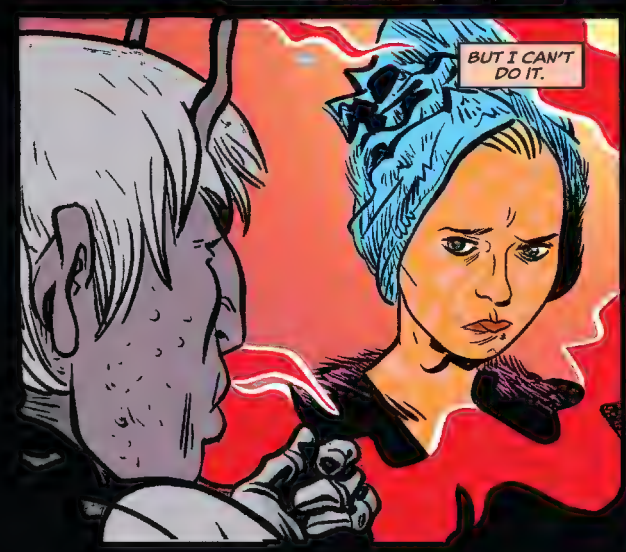
WHY COULDN'T THOSE BASTARDS MIND THEIR OWN BUSINESS? I WAS REALLY DIGGING BEING PART OF THE TEAM... AND NOW THEY GO AND SPOIL IT.
I'LL TELL YOU WHAT I WANNA DO. I WANNA GO RIGHT AROUND TO THAT TV STATION AND TEACH THOSE CREEPS A LESSON.
ZZYAK
WHO GIVES A DAMN WHAT THEY SAY OR THINK? AS LONG AS WE STICK TOGETHER...
YOU MEAN... YOU DON'T WANT ME TO QUIT? EVEN THOUGH PEOPLE KNOW WHO I AM?
HELL, NO.
WHAT WE NEED IS A MISSION. SOMETHING WHERE I CAN SHOW THE AMERICAN PUBLIC THAT I'M USING MY POWERS FOR GOOD.
THAT AIN'T A BAD IDEA.
I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO. SOMETHING NICE AND UNCOMPLICATED.
WHERE'RE YOU GOING?
GOT A MISSION OF MY OWN TO DEAL WITH FIRST.

PLEASE, GUY... DON'T ASK ME TO DO THIS...
Lacuna and the Stars

YOU JUST COULDN'T LEAVE IT ALONE. YOU'VE MADE A BAD SITUATION WORSE... AND NOW YOU'RE GOING TO HELP ME SORT IT OUT.
BUT...

NO BUTS, LACUNA. GET USED TO THE BIG BAD WORLD.
YOU SHOULD HAVE TOLD ME ABOUT ARNIE. THEY CALL ME THE EIGHTH X-STATIC. YOU COULD'VE TRUSTED ME.
I'M THROUGH TRUSTING ANYONE. MYSELF INCLUDED.
NOW... ARE YOU GOING TO HELP ME WITH THIS?

I SLIP BETWEEN THE MOMENTS WITH THE FULL INTENTION OF PUNCHING GUY SMITH ON THE NOSE, WHICH IS WHAT HE RICHLY DESERVES...


BUT I CAN'T DO IT.

DO I HAVE ANY OPTION?
NEGATIVE.

RETRACTABLE RAZOR-SHARP BONE-CLAWS AND HORNS. TITANIUM-ENHANCED EXOSKELETON. TECTONIC PLATES OF MACROMOLECULAR CONCRETE FOR FLESH. LIQUID NITROGEN FOR BLOOD.
OKAY, THAT'S A SLIGHT EXAGGERATION, BUT THIS SOCIOPATH IS WITHOUT DOUBT DEVOID OF ALL FEELING, CONSCIENCE, OR SHAME.
STATE PROPERTY
POLICE
KNOWN VARYINGLY AS THE WIDOW-MAKER, THE SOUL-THIEF, THE PAIN-BROKER...
RAZORHEAD HAS ESCAPED FROM HIS HIGH-SECURITY PRISON IN LOUISIANA, SLAUGHTERING SIX GUARDS AND A PRISON CHAPLAIN IN THE PROCESS.
AND NOW HE'S HOLED UP IN THE SWAMPS, LIVING OFF THE FLESH OF ALLIGATORS AND THE BLOOD OF THE SEARCH PARTIES SENT OUT TO CATCH HIM.

WELCOME TO OUR NICE, UNCOMPLICATED MISSION.
STRANGE... THE 'PORTING SEEMED SLIGHTLY HEAVIER THAN IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN.
MUST BE THIS SWAMPY OLD AIR. MAKES EVERYTHING SEEM WEIGHED DOWN.
THIS IS SO EXCELLENT. I'M ACTUALLY ON A REAL LIVE MISSION WITH X-STATIX!
THIS ISN'T A GAME, ARNIE. RAZORHEAD IS A VERY DANGEROUS INDIVIDUAL.
CAN YOU... PICK UP WHERE HE IS?
CLOSE. I THINK. I...
IT'S WEIRD... I DON'T FEEL TOO GOOD.
YOU DO LOOK A LITTLE PALE.
LOOK WHO'S TALKING.
FEELING A LITTLE... LIGHT-HEADED...
SIT DOWN A WHILE, ARNIE...
LOCK UP YOUR ALLIGATORS! WE'VE GOT COMPANY!

TAKEN CARE OF.
THANKS FOR THE SHOWER, BRO.
AIIRIRR!
YOU'RE DEAD.
SLITT
LADIES FIRST!
TIKE AND DEAD GIRL DOWN!
THAT'S NOT NICE.
UHHGN!
HE'S MINE!
YOU SAY THE NICEST THINGS!
NGG!

ALWAYS WANTED TO KILL THE LEADER OF THE PACK.
NNG...?
WHU... WHUUU...
YOU DON'T... MESS... ...WITH... ...X-STATIX...
BLAMMM

JEEZ. THAT WAS ONE TOUGH MUTANT. ALMOST OPENED ME UP.
YOU OKAY?
BETTER FOR SEEING WHAT YOU HAD FOR LUNCH, DEAD GIRL.

YOU SAVED OUR LIVES. YOU SAVED X-STATIX.
TELL THEM, WON'T YOU? TELL THEM THAT I DID GOOD. TELL...

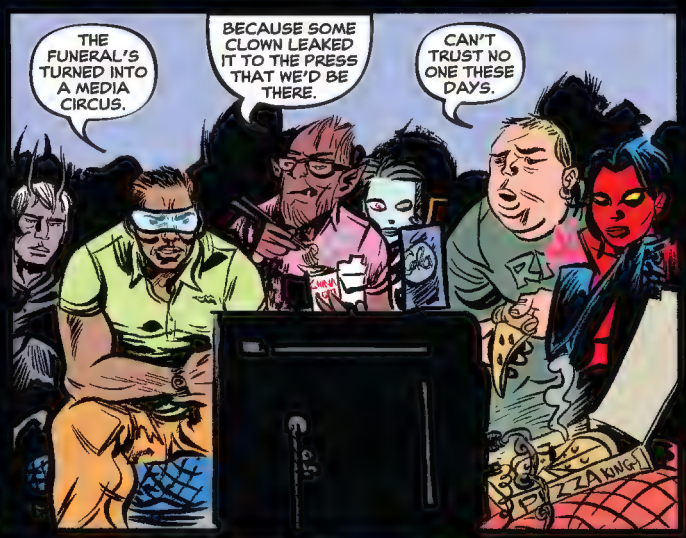
MY HEART. IT'S REAL BAD.
FUNNY... I COULD DO ALL THIS STRANGE STUFF... CHANGE FOLKS AROUND AND BLOW THEM UP... BUT I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT... MY HEART. AND MY FACE.
YOU WILL...
TELL...?

I'LL TELL THEM. X-STATIX WAS SAVED BY ARNIE LUNDBERG... OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE MYSTERIOUS FAN BOY...

HE'S GONE.
ARE WE... REALLY GOING TO TELL EVERYONE... THAT HE SAVED OUR BUTTS?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The Mysterious Fanboy™ Funeral Special
Goodbye Fanboy!
5

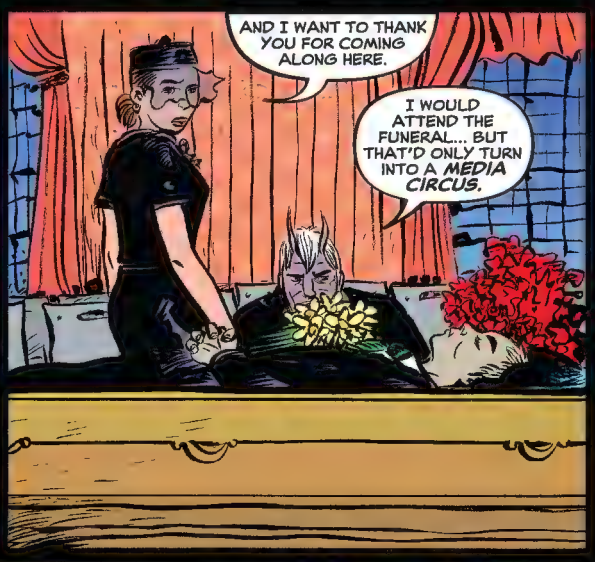

THE FUNERAL'S TURNED INTO A MEDIA CIRCUS.
BECAUSE SOME CLOWN LEAKED IT TO THE PRESS THAT WE'D BE THERE.
CAN'T TRUST NO ONE THESE DAYS.
PIZZA KING!

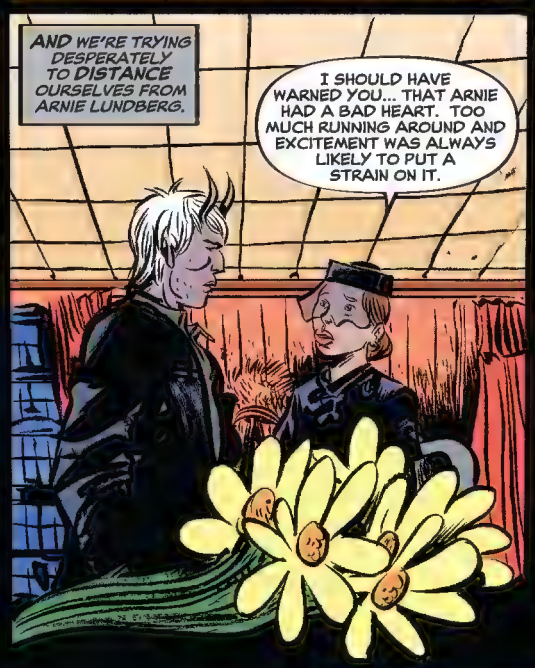
IT'S WEIRD... BUT THESE LAST FEW DAYS WITH ARNIE... WHILE WE'VE HAD TO ACT LIKE A REAL CLOSE-KNIT TEAM...
NO FLARE-UPS OR CLASHES OF PERSONALITY.

MAYBE WE WERE A BETTER TEAM. MAYBE WE WERE BETTER PEOPLE... WHEN WE WERE FORCED TO LIVE UP TO ARNIE'S EXPECTATIONS.
WOULDN'T THE WORLD BE A BETTER PLACE IF WE COULD KEEP ON ACTING THAT WAY?

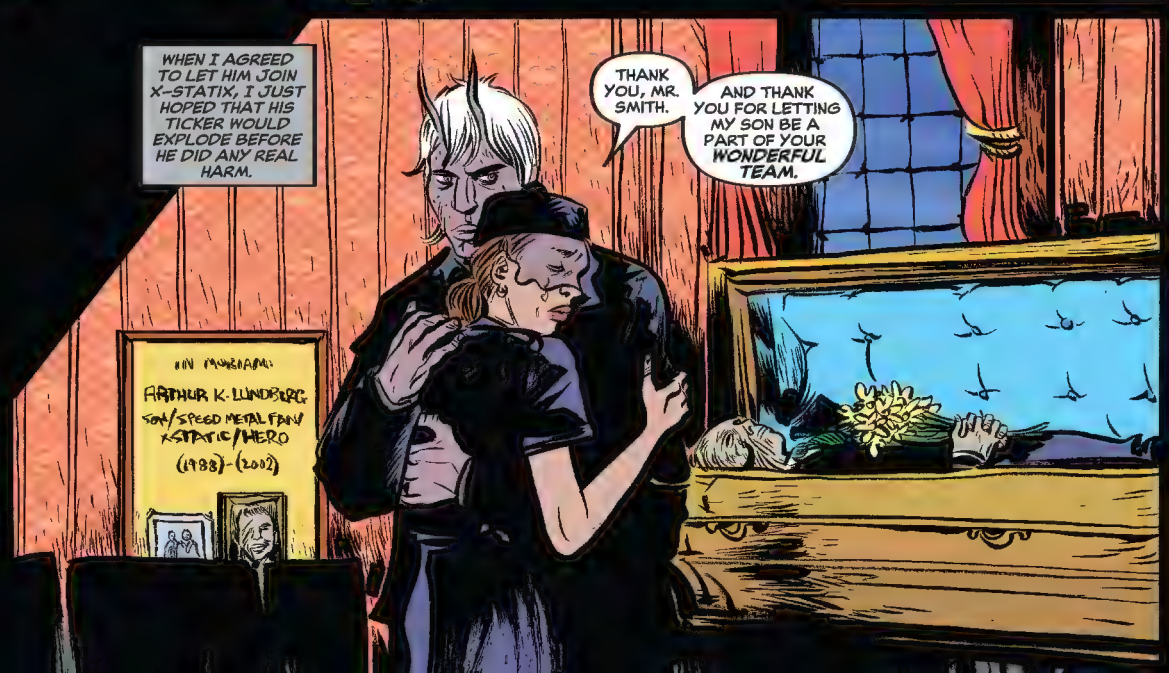
GET OUTTA HERE!
WE DEMAND INTERNECINE WARFARE!
I WANNA START DISSIN' EACH OTHER AGAIN!

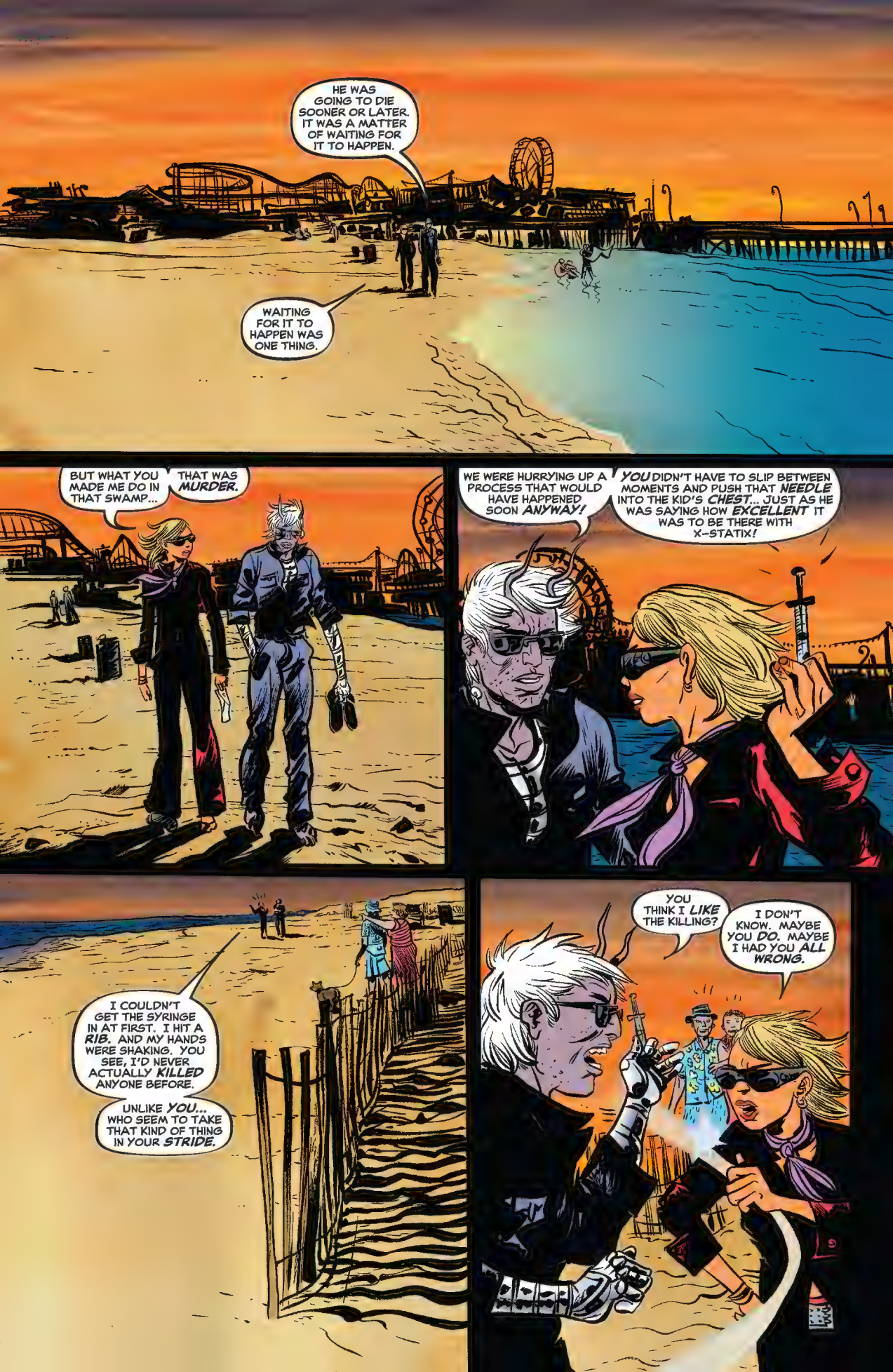
I WANT TO THANK YOU... FOR MAKING HIS LAST DAYS HAPPY ONES.

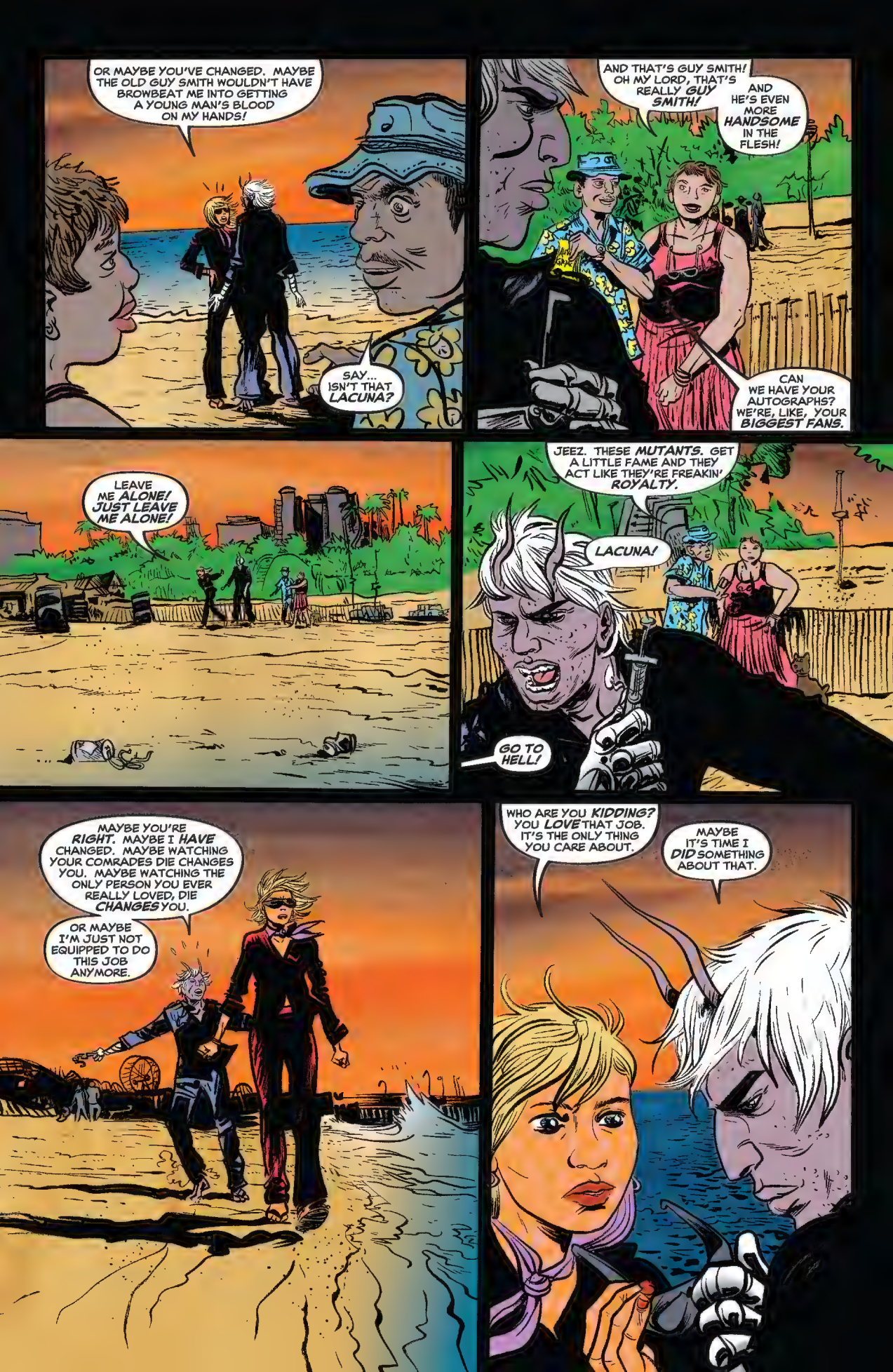

AND I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR COMING ALONG HERE.
I WOULD ATTEND THE FUNERAL.... BUT THAT'D ONLY TURN INTO A MEDIA CIRCUS.

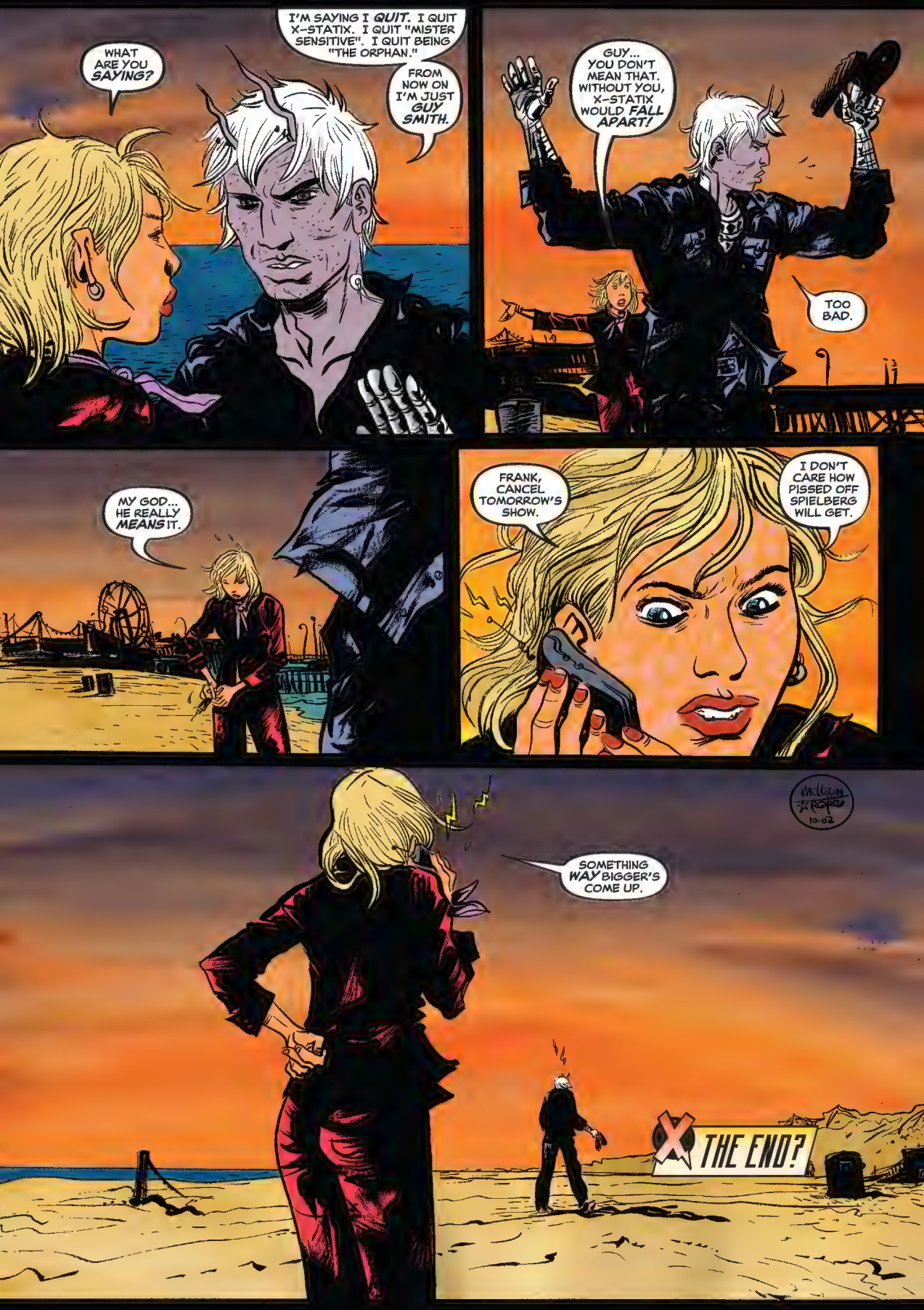

AND WE'RE TRYING DESPERATELY TO DISTANCE OURSELVES FROM ARNIE LUNDBERG.
I SHOULD HAVE WARNED YOU... THAT ARNIE HAD A BAD HEART. TOO MUCH RUNNING AROUND AND EXCITEMENT WAS ALWAYS LIKELY TO PUT A STRAIN ON IT.

I SENSED THE WEAKNESS OF HIS HEART THE FIRST TIME I MET HIM. THE HOLE. THE MALFORMED LEFT VENTRICLE. THE ARRHYTHMIA.
DON'T BLAME YOURSELF, MRS. LUNDBERG. IT WAS ENOUGH TO MAKE THE STRONGEST HEART GIVE OUT.
I JUST WISH I COULD'VE KILLED RAZORHEAD BEFORE HE MANAGED TO ATTACK ARNIE.


WHEN I AGREED TO LET HIM JOIN X-STATIX, I JUST HOPED THAT HIS TICKER WOULD EXPLODE BEFORE HE DID ANY REAL HARM.
THANK YOU, MR. SMITH.
AND THANK YOU FOR LETTING MY SON BE A PART OF YOUR WONDERFUL TEAM.
IN MEMORIAM:
ARTHUR K. LUNDBERG
SON/SPEED METAL FAN/
X-STATIC/HERO
(1988)-(2002)


HE WAS GOING TO DIE SOONER OR LATER. IT WAS A MATTER OF WAITING FOR IT TO HAPPEN.
WAITING FOR IT TO HAPPEN WAS ONE THING.
BUT WHAT YOU MADE ME DO IN THAT SWAMP...
THAT WAS MURDER.
WE WERE HURRYING UP A PROCESS THAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED SOON ANYWAY!
YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO SLIP BETWEEN MOMENTS AND PUSH THAT NEEDLE INTO THE KID'S CHEST... JUST AS HE WAS SAYING HOW EXCELLENT IT WAS TO BE THERE WITH X-STATIX!
I COULDN'T GET THE SYRINGE IN AT FIRST. I HIT A RIB. AND MY HANDS WERE SHAKING. YOU SEE, I'D NEVER ACTUALLY KILLED ANYONE BEFORE.
UNLIKE YOU... WHO SEEM TO TAKE THAT KIND OF THING IN YOUR STRIDE.
YOU THINK I LIKE THE KILLING?
I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE YOU DO. MAYBE I HAD YOU ALL WRONG.


OR MAYBE YOU'VE CHANGED. MAYBE THE OLD GUY SMITH WOULDN'T HAVE BROWBEAT ME INTO GETTING A YOUNG MAN'S BLOOD ON MY HANDS!
SAY... ISN'T THAT LACUNA?
AND THAT'S GUY SMITH! OH MY LORD, THAT'S REALLY GUY SMITH!
AND HE'S EVEN MORE HANDSOME IN THE FLESH!
CAN WE HAVE YOUR AUTOGRAPHS? WE'RE, LIKE, YOUR BIGGEST FANS.
LEAVE ME ALONE! JUST LEAVE ME ALONE!
JEEZ. THESE MUTANTS. GET A LITTLE FAME AND THEY ACT LIKE THEY'RE FREAKIN' ROYALTY.
LACUNA!
GO TO HELL!
MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT. MAYBE I HAVE CHANGED. MAYBE WATCHING YOUR COMRADES DIE CHANGES YOU. MAYBE WATCHING THE ONLY PERSON YOU EVER REALLY LOVED, DIE CHANGES YOU.
OR MAYBE I'M JUST NOT EQUIPPED TO DO THIS JOB ANYMORE.
WHO ARE YOU KIDDING? YOU LOVE THAT JOB. IT'S THE ONLY THING YOU CARE ABOUT.
MAYBE IT'S TIME I DID SOMETHING ABOUT THAT.


WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
I'M SAYING I QUIT. I QUIT X-STATIX. I QUIT "MISTER SENSITIVE". I QUIT BEING "THE ORPHAN."
FROM NOW ON I'M JUST GUY SMITH.
GUY... YOU DON'T MEAN THAT. WITHOUT YOU, X-STATIX WOULD FALL APART!
TOO BAD.
MY GOD... HE REALLY MEANS IT.
FRANK, CANCEL TOMORROW'S SHOW.
I DON'T CARE HOW PISSED OFF SPIELBERG WILL GET.
SOMETHING WAY BIGGER'S COME UP.
THE END?

#123 SCRIPT

We dared them.

That's right, Marvel Prez Bill Jemas and EIC Joe Quesada hatched a test for the Mighty Marvel Maestros: Since you are the best artists and writers in the biz, we challenge you to tell a story using only visuals. After all, if a picture is worth a thousand words, then a comic book filled with only images would be worth...well, more words than the Collector could count!

And if you think creating a story with no words is half the work, think again, True Believer! The writer has to craft a story using no dialogue or caption boxes to communicate information — and pencilers have to make sure their storytelling is so clear that text isn't needed to explain what's going on.

Just to show you how our Mighty Marvel Maestros met the challenge, and to give you a unique peek behind the curtain, here's the plot to the very story you just read! Just compare it to the art and you'll see how the dare was done!

PAGE ONE

1. We're in the main living area of X-Force HQ. Nice big shot taking up the top half of the page of our team having a little R & R. TV, books, whatever. As long as it isn't good for the mind.

I'd like you to put in some prominent position a clock with some kind of recognizable face. Maybe it's an authentic X-FORCE CLOCK (available at all good stores now!) because this clock and time itself will play an important part in what we might laughingly term this month's story.

But what's this?

Doop is in the corner of the room. Its back to us. What's going on? Is Doop sulking?

2. Nope. Close on Doop. Like a lot of stunted green blob creatures of indeterminate gender, Doop sometimes suffers from skin that is both dry and greasy, leading to embarrassing ZITS. And usually they spring up right before a party or a battle against superhuman tyrants.

So right here we're close to Doop, who is floating in front of a MIRROR and is about to — yes, we've all done it, Jesus, even the Queen has probably done it (or at least got a lady-in-waiting to do it for her!) – Doop's about to squeeze the pus out of that bad boy.

3. CLOSE DETAIL OF THE CLOCK. Let's say it is one second to noon. The second hand moving.

WE ART IN SFX: TICK

4. AND NOW A VERY CLOSE SHOT OF DOOP... Eyes show alarm as it wonders just what it's about to squeeze out...

PAGES TWO AND THREE

Right. I'd like one of those nice big double-page spreads now.

My god. X-Force has faced some tough tests but none like this. To the left of the spread we see Doop. It's squeezed its spot.

But what is radiating from it is like nothing on earth. It is a tsunami of reality-bending, dimensional-challenging weirdness, blowing through and blowing away the assorted members of X-FORCE... whose weird and hallucinatory trajectory takes them right across into the second page of this spread...

Make this pretty heavy too. These guys are really being blown away.

ROLL TITLE AND CREDITS: TICK TOCK

Peter Milligan – Writer, Mike Allred – Artist, etc.

PAGE FOUR

1. Doop looks at the room. It's an X-Force Marie Celeste. All the food and books and TVs or whatever it was that the guys were doing is just as it was. But there is no sign of any of X-Force.

2. CLOSE on Doop. Hand over its mouth. Oops!

3. It looks at its reflection in the mirror. The little cavity where the zit has been squeezed.

And has an idea. It might be a long shot, but what is there to lose (besides our entire readership)?

4. CLOSE. Doop is working a FINGER right INTO THE ZIT HOLE!

PAGE FIVE

1. Right. And now things start to get a little strange. We seem now to be INSIDE DOOP. We can see its finger and part of its hand coming in through the zit hole.

2. Cut back to outside...and the process is continuing. Doop now has an arm in through the enlarged zit hole.

3. CUT BACK inside Doop. Incredibly, one of its eyes can be seen coming in through the zit hole. The plucky little creature is somehow turning itself outside in... WE SHOULD SEE THE STRAIN AND EFFORT THIS IS PUTTING THE LITTLE DOOP THROUGH.

4. Cut back outside as Doop DISAPPEARS INTO ITSELF...maybe just a shimmer or a ghost image of where Doop was... The X-FORCE CLOCK SHOULD BE SEEN ON THE WALL...

5. CLOSE ON THE CLOCK. The time is the same... The second hand still has not moved...

PAGE SIX

1. WE'RE NOW INSIDE "DOOP LAND." And it is a strange place indeed. And pretty horrific. A kind of Doop sensibility meets

Hieronymus Bosch. A huge vista spreads out before Doop. And it seems to be teeming with millions — or an artistic approximation thereof – of Doop-like creatures. But these are strange misshapen Doops. These are Doops from the dark side of the id.

2. On Doop. Biting its nails or showing some other sign of trepidation.

3. Then it looks up. High above is the zit hole…through which the clock – set at the same time – hovers like a strange orbiting planet.

PAGE SEVEN

1. CUT. We seem to be in some kind of INNER CITY. Some poor rundown area. There are a lot of YOUNG GUYS coming toward us. This can be pretty hallucinatory…dark… These guys are definitely threatening…

2. Pull back…we see that PHAT is here. But he isn't seeing these guys as his brothers. He is scared witless by them. Backing away…

3. He turns and runs…

4. But now there are more PEOPLE coming the other way. Make it nightmarish. The dark night, the shadows and the people merging into one…

PAGE EIGHT

1. CUT BACK TO DOOP. This can be pretty violent. Doop is trying to wade its way through the legions of EVIL DOOPS.

2. Up ahead he sees a kind of WINDOW or SCREEN. Maybe like a segment from a stained glass window. On it we see Phat's scared face. Doop is trying to get to it.

3. AN EVIL DOOP SINKS ITS TEETH INTO DOOP'S ARM. Doop screaming in pain…

4. And then thuds its finger in the evil Doop's eye…making it let go…

5. It leaps toward the tortured image of Phat…

PAGE NINE

1. Here we see DOOP arriving in the nightmare land that Phat has found himself in. Doop is a giant here, looming over Phat and the fleeing black guys…

2. Doop grabs Phat in its hand…like a little green King Kong…

3. And now Doop pops Phat, screaming, into its mouth!

PAGE TEN

1. CUT. We retain our nightmarish theme.

We're in a kind of Borgesian, Escher-like LIBRARY. Long dark corridors leading back into terrible nothingness.

Myles is pulling books off the shelves. He's going crazy… There should be some books open around him.

2. We see why. He's holding TWO BOOKS. All the pages are blank. If we could we should see more books with blank pages all around him… MYLES IS CLIMBING UP THE SIDE OF THE SHELVES TO REACH SOME HIGHER BOOKS…

3. And now the books collapse around him as he falls…the empty pages like dry leaves fluttering about him…

4. From the pile of blank books that swamps him he looks up… From the corridor comes some STRANGE giant demon VERSION OF HIS FATHER. WITH A CANE. DEAD EYES. HE IS NAKED. AND THERE IS WRITING…INDECIPHERABLE TEXT…IN DOOP LANGUAGE MAYBE…SCRAWLED ALL OVER HIM…

PAGE ELEVEN

1. Myles screams silently and tries to clamber out of the books. The figure of the father-monster is gaining on him.

2. CLOSE on Myles…seeing a book in front of him… DOOP is on the cover…

3. Weird shot as Myles opens the page and something HUGE SHOOTS OUT OF IT…

4. It's DOOP. Like a POP-OUT DOOP from the Doop book. Looming above Myles…

5. Doop sucks in…and sucks in Myles…him…

PAGE TWELVE

1. It's DOOP now in the library. Myles has gone. Doop is looking down curiously at one of the BOOKS lying in the pile around it.

2. It picks it up and we see the cover. *SPIKEY CROSS-DRESSING*. And on the cover a big pic of THE SPIKE dressed in women's clothes. Let's make this very sexy and very strange.

3. Doop looks around. This gets worse. Or better, depending on your politics.

LOTS OF TINY DOOPS DRESSED AS WOMEN ARE CHARGING DOWN THE CORRIDOR TOWARD HIM.

WE SHOULD SEE THE CLOCK IN THE "SKY" ABOVE…

4. DOOP'S POV: THE CLOCK, STILL SHOWING one second to noon, but it's almost as though we see the second hand twitching as it tries eagerly to move to tock…

5. On Doop. What the hell? It tosses the *Spikey Cross-Dressing* book into its mouth with a kind of "what else can a Doop do? shrug…or as close as someone with Doop's physiognomy can get to shrugging.

PAGE THIRTEEN

1. CUT. A desert scene. Desert full of scorched bones, Dalí-esque skeletons. There are A NUMBER OF BURNING SUNS IN THE SKY. And there is a figure — dark, we can't make him out — crawling toward us…

2. CLOSE ON THIS FIGURE. It's TIKE. He seems in a bad way. Burning up. THE SWEAT IS DRIPPING MADLY OFF OF HIM…but his face is bloated as though there's a lot more fluid almost bursting to come out…

3. He looks down at his hands: The SWEAT IS FLOWING FROM HIS PALMS LIKE WATER, steaming…hot sweat…

4. We pull back and now we see him EXPLODING IN A BALL OF WARM SWEAT.

PAGE FOURTEEN

1. NOW THE DESERT has been transformed into a vile, sweaty sea…a sea of sweat and phlegm and bodily excretions…and Tike is drowning in it…gasping…waving his tired arms helplessly out…

2. We move UNDER THE SEA OF SWEAT with Tike as he sinks… drowning in the awful sludge…

3. But now…what's this? He sees DOOP swimming powerfully toward him…Tike's eyes wide with surprise and hope…

PAGE FIFTEEN

1. CUT. We are in a huge room: all stainless steel and sharp edges. Clinical, a nightmarish warped OPERATING THEATER. Around the side of the room are some kind of TRANSPARENT PLINTHS. Each contains something we cannot make out yet. In the middle of the room — small, vulnerable, her back to us — is a figure we recognize as Edie. She seems to have her hands to her face.

2. We move up to and around Edie and see that her hands are over her mouth. Something is wrong. Her eyes show pain and confusion. THERE IS BLOOD TRICKLING FROM IN BETWEEN HER FINGERS.

3. Edie drops her hands. Dark blood is coming from her mouth…

PAGE SIXTEEN

1. She crawls over to one of the weird transparent plinths. Inside it, suspended in the glass…is a grisly sight. A SEVERED TONGUE!

2. But now she looks down at the other plinths and we see that each one contains a severed tongue. Some fatter. Some redder. But each one a tongue. We are in the HALL OF TONGUES!

3. Going crazy…she runs down the rows of severed tongues. She's looking for her tongue! Where is it?

4. Up ahead…she sees a familiar figure atop a plinth. It's Doop. Beckoning her toward it…

PAGE SEVENTEEN

1. Edie reaches the plinth with Doop, who points down to the tongue held inside it. She's smiling! She'd know her own tongue anywhere…

2. Doop hits the plinth, which shatters… Edie is catching her tongue…

3. CLOSE on Edie pushing her tongue back into her mouth…

4. CLOSE A smiling Edie — tongue in place, and we can see it — who goes to talk, but…

5. CLOSE Doop. Finger to its mouth. Shhh!

PAGE EIGHTEEN

A BIG DRAMATIC FULL-PAGE SHOT featuring the only member of our crew we haven't seen yet.

Guy Smith.

But Guy – and I have a feeling that this won't come as a complete surprise to you – Guy is in trouble. He is buried up to his neck. And he is screaming. Face distorting with acute pain.

BECAUSE THERE ARE WHAT APPEAR TO BE INSECTS crawling all over his face… He's powerless to get them off…

We should be far enough away not to be able to completely discern what kind of insects these are…

PAGE NINETEEN

1. CLOSER. And we see that these are not insects that are tormenting Guy but hundreds of tiny evil DEMON DOOPS. Biting, stabbing, scratching…in Guy's nostrils…getting into his eyes…his mouth… His eyes are slits… He's trying to open them…

2. A SHADOW FALLS OVER GUY'S FACE. He opens his pained eyes and looks up…

3. Reverse angle – looking up so we see that Doop – the real non-demon Doop – is looming above Guy…

4. PULL AROUND. Doop has taken hold of Guy's head and is pulling at it with all its might trying to pull Guy out of the ground…

PAGE TWENTY

1. And something gives… Doop falls back…

2. Eeek! Doop has Guy's DECAPITATED HEAD in its hands. Staring at it. Guy doesn't seem to be pained by being decapitated. He seems to be looking at Doop with something like gratitude. What a guy!

3. Doop looks around. There's THE CLOCK…second hand twitching… and also the APERTURE through which Doop entered Doop World.

4. Doop tucks Guy under its arm football-style and runs like a linebacker toward the aperture…

PAGE TWENTY-ONE

1. BACK TO HQ. Doop appears in midair, emerging from itself, as though righting itself after being turned inside out… The clock is right next to it…

2. Doop – now fully formed and normal — sticks a finger against the second hand, stopping its normal passage… WE SEE THAT DOOP'S ZIT, the one that started all the trouble, looks huge and full of pus. Its other hand is about to squeeze it again…

3. WHOOSH! It all comes out. A blurred, amorphous pus-like amalgam of THE X-FORCE TEAM…spurting in a blurred mass from Doop's zit…

PAGE TWENTY-TWO

1. X-Force re-forms in the HQ. THEY SHOULD BE IN EXACTLY THE SAME POSITION THAT THEY WERE IN just before Doop blew them all away by squeezing the poison from its zit.

2. Doop looks up at the clock. Finally, the second hand flips over and the clock goes…

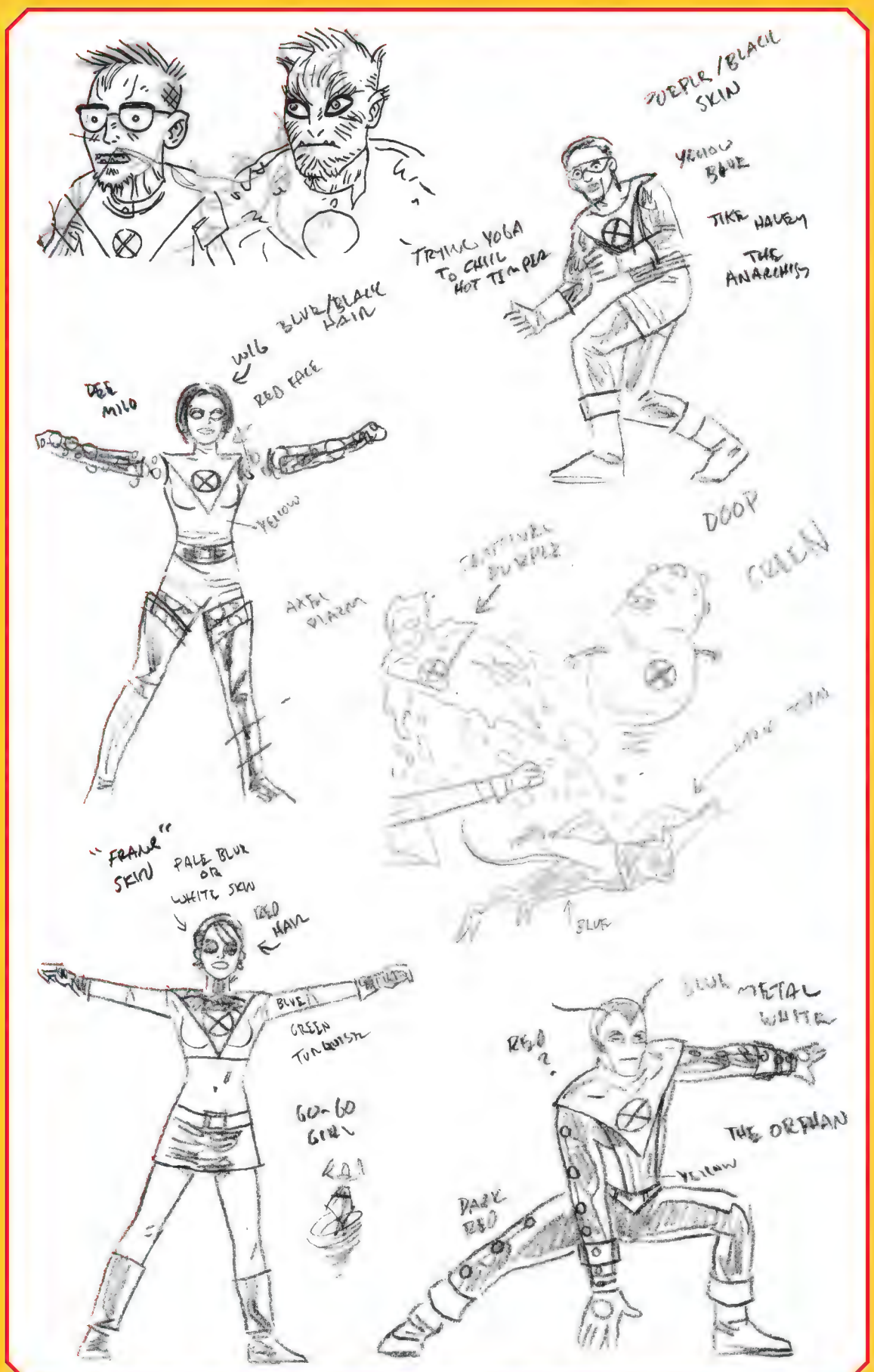
TOCK

3. Doop smiles at us in relief. Phew!

And the annoying zit seems to have vanished.

THE END

Michael Allred
CHARACTER SKETCHES


PURPLE/BLACK SKIN
YELLOW BLUE
TIKE HAVEN
THE ANARCHIST
TRYING YOGA TO CHILL HOT TEMPER
WIG
BLUE/BLACK HAIR
RED FACE
DEE MILO
YELLOW
AXEL PLASMA
DOOP
CAPTIVE PURPLE
GREEN
BLUE
"FRAME" SKIN
PALE BLUE OR WHITE SKIN
RED HAIR
BLUE
GREEN TURQUOISE
GO-GO GIRL
BLUE METAL WHITE
RED ?
THE ORPHAN
YELLOW
DARK RED

Michael Allred & Laura Allred
X-FORCE: FAMOUS, MUTANT & MORTAL HARDCOVER COVER ART

Michael Allred

X-FORCE VOL. 1: NEW BEGINNINGS TPB COVER CONCEPT

Michael Allred

X-FORCE VOL. 1: NEW BEGINNINGS TPB COVER CONCEPT

Michael Allred

X-FORCE VOL. 1: NEW BEGINNINGS TPB FINAL COVER

Michael Allred

X-FORCE VOL. 2: THE FINAL CHAPTER TPB COVER COLLAGE

Michael Allred

X-FORCE VOL. 2: THE FINAL CHAPTER TPB BACK COVER

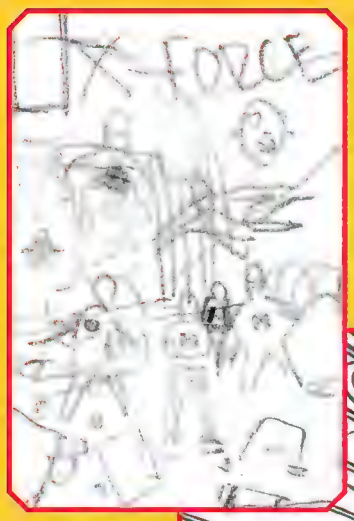
Michael Allred

TWO POTENTIAL TEAM LINEUPS

Michael Allred
LOGO DESIGNS

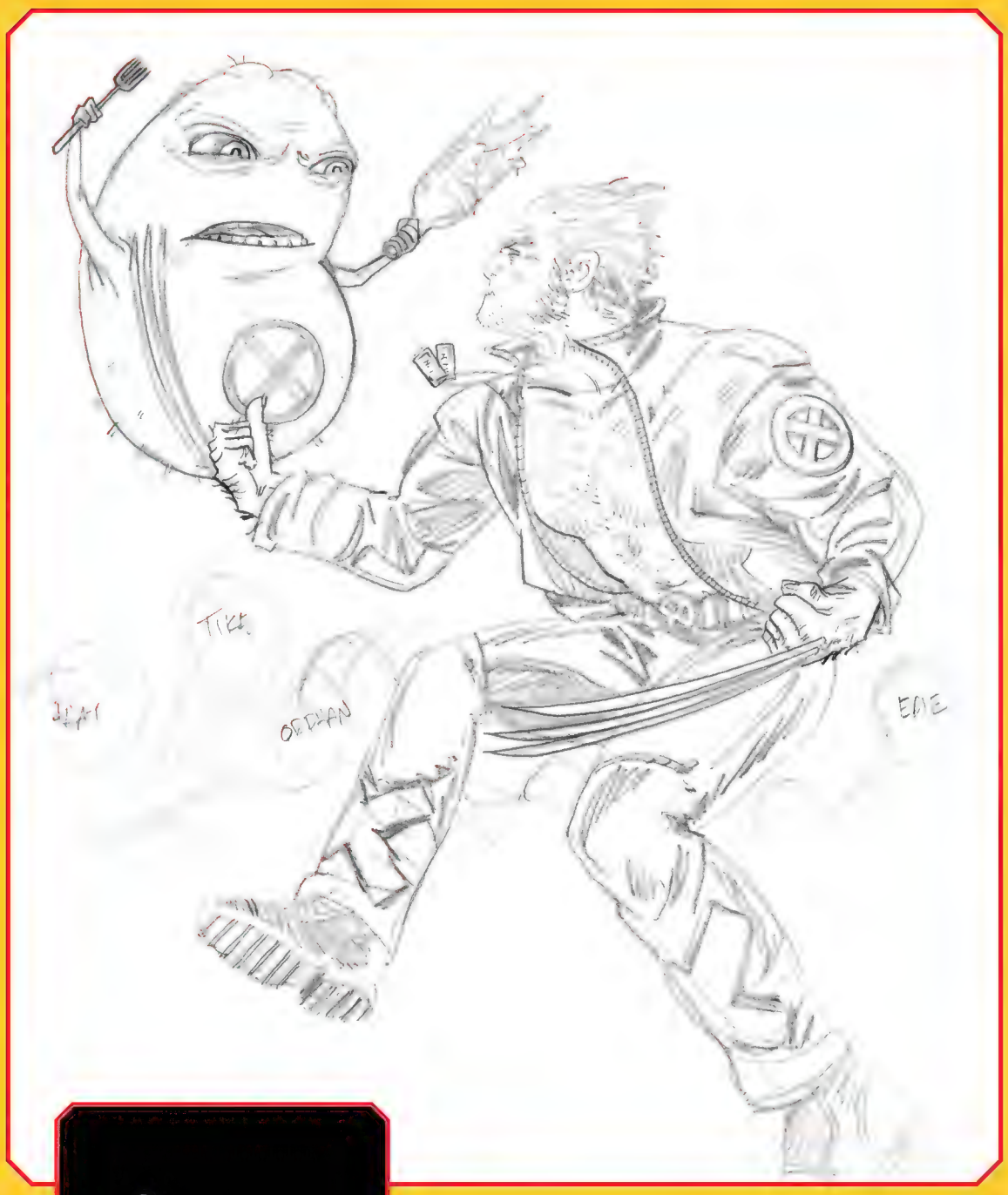
Michael Allred
X-FORCE #116 COVER SKETCH

Laura Allred
X-FORCE #116 ALTERNATE COLORS



Michael Allred

UNUSED *X-FORCE* #116 COVER SKETCH AND INKS



Michael Allred

X-FORCE #120 ORIGINAL COVER SKETCH

Michael Allred

UNPUBLISHED COVER. HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY COMICS VISIONARY JIM STERANKO. THIS COVER WAS THE FIRST FULL-COLOR DEPICTION OF THE ORIGINAL X-FORCE TEAM.

Michael Allred

UNPUBLISHED COVER. ALONG WITH THE NEVER-SEEN HORN, IT IS THE FIRST CONCEPT SKETCH OF THE X-FORCE HEADQUARTERS EXTERIOR.

Michael Allred

UNPUBLISHED COVER. THIS COVER SHOWS X-FORCE IN ACTION WEARING THEIR NIGHTTIME BATTLE GEAR.

Michael Allred

UNPUBLISHED COVER. THIS SPLIT COVER SHOWS THE TEAM AT PLAY AND AT WORK.

Michael Allred

PINUP OF THE ORIGINAL X-FORCE LINEUP FROM *WIZARD* MAGAZINE'S X-MEN PREVIEW

Darwyn Cooke
PROMOTIONAL PINUP FOR *X-FORCE #124*

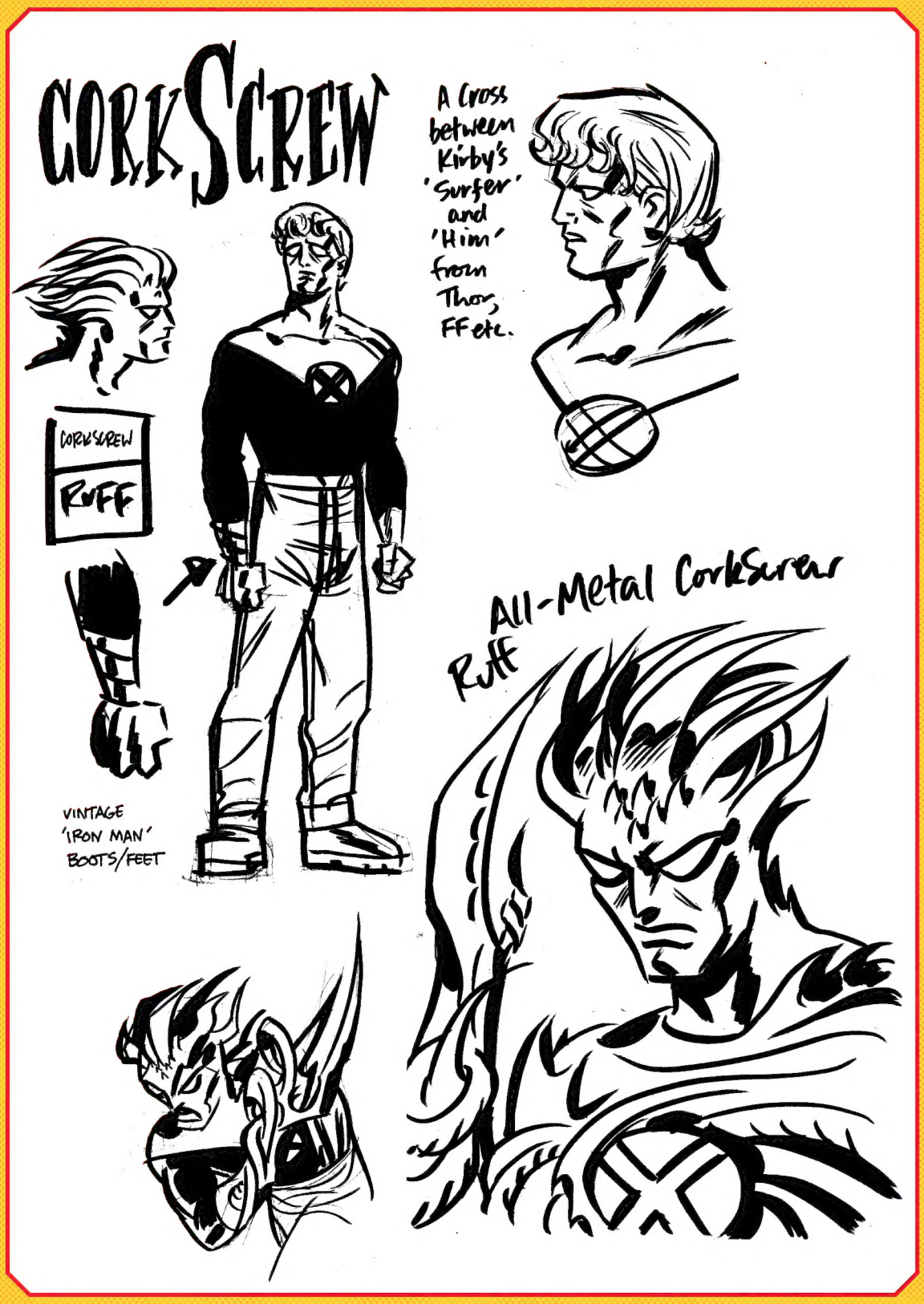
Darwyn Cooke
X-FORCE PINUP

Darwyn Cooke
GUY SMITH (THE ORPHAN) PINUP

Darwyn Cooke
EDIE SAWYER (U-GO GIRL) PINUP

Darwyn Cooke

U-GO GIRL AND ANARCHIST PINUPS


CORKSCREW
A Cross between Kirby's 'Surfer' and 'Him' from Thor, FF etc.
CORKSCREW
RUFF
VINTAGE 'IRON MAN' BOOTS/FEET
All-Metal CorkScrew
Ruff

INTRODUCTION FROM *X-FORCE: FAMOUS, MUTANT & MORTAL* HARDCOVER

So let's be honest, you probably don't want to read this book let alone buy it, and I don't blame you. I'll let you in on a secret. I didn't want to write it. I mean, this isn't just a comic book, it's an X-book. And we all know what that means: a rigid, established universe of mainstream characters; a Byzantine labyrinth of continuity and crossovers unintelligible to all but those strange souls who have dedicated most of their wretched lives to studying it. So when Marvel editor Axel Alonso suggested that I write X-Force, my immediate response was to laugh. And then, when I realized he was serious, laugh again and say, "No. Never. Impossible."

And then we started talking about how we would approach the series if we could do whatever we wanted. If I could get through all the continuity, if I could use a mainstream comic to explore real issues—in short, if I could write a story about what it would really be like to have incredible mutant powers, and then to use this as a way to explain some of the more insane and extreme elements of our media-obsessed world. And guess what? Axel and then Marvel said fine, do what you want, ditch what you want, to hell with continuity.

Before I knew it, the bastard had me agreeing to do an X-book. But a different kind of X-book; the kind of X-book a discerning, erudite and sophisticated reader—a reader not dissimilar to yourself, probably—would not be embarrassed to read, if seen on their bookshelve, or even discuss with people for whom the name "Wolverine" conjures up nothing more than a hairy mammal native to North America and not a man-hunting mutant with side-whiskers and claws that go "snikt."

So what makes our X-book different from the others? For starters, the members of our team of super heroes are clearly more interested in fame, the fast life and lucrative merchandising deals than defeating tyrannical super villains. The missions to save the planet are really just backdrops, the dull but necessary part of their job that allows them to continue living their fabulous, if short-lived and dangerous, lives. These characters are freaks, sure. But freaks in the same way as, say, Dennis Rodman, David Beckham or international supermodel Gisele Bündchen are freaks. It's freakish to have that amount of talent or beauty. We pay these freaks huge amounts of money so we can watch and dissect their lives and have those lives add a bit of sparkle to our own drab existences. Of course, we can't wait for them to fall over. We long for the day when they get hit by a truck or busted for their drug habit. We hate them. We fear them. And sure as hell need them.

So if you're up for a bit of postmodern deconstruction of our celebrity-mad world shot through the skewed lens of a comic masquerading as a mainstream X-book, you might just be glad that you bought and read this book. I'm almost certain I'm glad I wrote it.

Peter Milligan
Badgebup, Australia
December 2002

SEX. MONEY. POWER. FAME.

THAT'S WHAT DRIVES THESE MUTANT HEROES!

Peter Milligan and Michael Allred reboot X-Force into reality stars in their bright and bold 21st-century deconstruction of the X-books! But what really happens when an X-team becomes huge media stars? Find out in this wild examination of celebrity culture — with a far higher body count than any reality TV show! Fall in love with the Orphan, the Anarchist, Dead Girl, Phat, Vivisector, U-Go Girl, the incomparable Doop and more — but don't get too attached, as there's no guarantee that any of them will make it out of each battle alive! And when the team relaunches their brand as the X-Statix, will it propel them to even greater fame? Or will the interactive O-Force become the hot new thing?

Collecting ***X-Force (1991) #116-129, Brotherhood #9*** and ***X-Statix #1-5*** — written by Peter Milligan and X; and illustrated by Michael Allred, Darwyn Cooke, Duncan Fegredo, Sean Phillips and Paul Pope.

MARVEL

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